

Health & Care Bill



'Integrated' NHS plans will hurt staff and patients

NHS staff have gone all out to save lives during the pandemic. Many who died could have survived if the Government had ensured full staffing, proper PPE, effective contact tracing and support for people who needed to isolate.

As the virus spread, the Government delayed lockdown, handed out thousands of contracts – some to crony companies with no relevant experience – and spent billions on privatised Test & Trace which did not work.

Now they're restructuring the NHS through a new Health and Care Bill, which will confirm the break-up of the

NHS into 42 'Integrated Care Systems' (ICSs) and lead to yet more privatisation.

More than 200 firms, including dozens from the US health insurance sector, are queuing up to develop ICSs. They may sit on ICS management boards and help write their plans, to shape which services will be provided, who will provide them, and where.

Bad news for NHS workers 

This bill threatens patient care and your job

Threat to national pay

Currently, NHS staff have national pay, terms and conditions, through medical contracts or Agenda for Change (AfC). When NHS England (NHSE) tried to promote local pay in the South West in 2012, all the health unions rose up to defeat the 'pay cartel'.

But now, NHSE wants each ICS to have its own block budget, based on local factors. Local funding could mean local pay, weakening AfC principles of equal pay for equal work. Local pay could drain staff away from poorly funded areas, threatening patient care.

Flexible working

NHSE wants flexible working so staff can easily be transferred to different sites and organisations across and beyond an ICS. This will interfere with union organisation, demoralise staff, reduce continuity of care, undermine local knowledge and team working, and require more travelling, so be bad for the environment as well as staff.

Deregulation

NHSE wants to dilute the skill mix in teams, and the Government seeks powers to remove individual professions from regulation as new technology promotes decision-making by app, replacing clinical judgement. This is a risk to patients and threatens professional development.

The Bill will exempt the NHS from Public Contracts Regulations which safeguard environmental, social and labour laws (International Labour Organisation conventions, such as the right to strike) and the ability to reject bidders with poor track records. It will be a free-for-all.

What it means for everyone

The Bill aims to cut the cost of care while handing profits to the private sector. It will do nothing to reduce waiting lists, rationing of NHS treatments, staff shortages, the backlog in referrals caused by the pandemic, or lack of funding for public health measures to prevent ill health.

And, yet again, there are no proposals or funding to improve social care or to build on existing coordination between health and social care services.

**Call on your union
and your MP to
oppose this Bill!**



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