*Covering letter Councillors to send with Briefing Notes*

*It’s best to personalise the covering letter – write it in your own words. For example:*

Dear ……

I am writing to you about the Health and Care Bill that is currently going through Parliament and which the government expects to be enacted by April 2022.

I am very concerned that if passed, this Bill will further fragment the NHS in England into around 40 Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), open publicly funded services even further to profit-seeking private sector companies, and lead to cuts, closures and rationing of health services.

My concerns include that, if enacted, the Bill

* has been hailed as ending the market in NHS services but it does nothing of the sort. Instead, it will turn the NHS into a *deregulated* market.
* repeals the legal requirement to assess the care needs of patients before they are discharged from hospital, despite existing and severe pressures on community care.
* lacks clarity about the cross-border provision of emergency care when this is required by a patient not registered with the ICS, raising concerns about delays in treatment.
* gives extensive new powers to the Secretary of State, including new opportunities to intervene at all stages in local decisions about service reconfigurations, and
* will do nothing to improve the crisis in social care.

I am additionally concerned that local authorities (LAs) will have limited influence within the new ‘integrated’ systems. The Bill states that ICSs will have a dual structure:

* an Integrated Care Board (ICB) that sets strategy and is responsible for overall management of the ICS, and
* an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), set up by the ICB, that represents local NHS providers, local authorities, and others (including private providers).

The legislation provides for only limited LA representation on the ICB, highlighting the hierarchical nature of the relationship between the ICB and ICP.

However, LAs have an opportunity to address this. Each ICB will be responsible for developing an ICS constitution that will determine who can sit on the ICB, ICP and their sub committees, whether or not there will be requirements to hold meetings in public and more. Local authorities will have a vital role to play through Health and Wellbeing Boards and Scrutiny Committees in determining the ultimate format of the local ICS constitution. This means it’s vital that local councillors are fully informed of the issues at stake and can optimise their role in determining the future of local health and care services.

I attach a briefing giving fuller details in case this is useful. It has been written by Keep Our NHS Public, of which I am a member.

I would welcome any discussion with you about the Bill, and I urge you to add your voice to those who oppose it.

Yours etc,

Name

Address