

Press release on behalf of Keep Our NHS Public - for IMMEDIATE use

Campaigners response to Health and Care Bill second reading - and Pictures

The proposed Health and Care Bill which has its second reading in parliament today, contains serious implications for the future of a fully public service. This afternoon a protest was held outside parliament opposing the bill by campaigners from Keep Our NHS Public [1] and politicians (including shadow health secretary Jonathon Ashworth). Photos are attached.

Secretary of Keep Our NHS Public and health policy academic Dr John Lister, who has analysed the wording of the bill in some detail, has uncovered serious omissions which could leave people without access to vital services. He says:

"Conservative MPs who want to nod through the new Health and Care Bill should be warned that it contains serious omissions that could leave their local constituents without access to vital hospital care and emergency services. Hospital medical services and ophthalmic services, which Clinical Commissioning Groups are currently under a duty to provide, are both omitted from the list in Paragraph 15 of services the new Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) will have a duty to provide under the new Health and Care Bill. Nor – as a result of the Bill omitting another specific provision [paragraph 3 1C] from the 2006 Act – would the new Boards be legally responsible for ensuring emergency services are available for all persons present in the area – a key issue for ICBs covering city commuter areas.

Paragraph 114A of the Bill, creating a new payment scheme to replace the current fixed tariff of prices to be paid to NHS and private providers for specific treatment, includes a wide range of new options including conferring discretion on the ICB over whether to pay for a service or not. Under conditions where local health budgets are stretched to breaking point after a decade of austerity, this could result in an even longer list of treatments being effectively removed from the NHS by decisions of ICBs not to pay for them – forcing patients to go private or go without.

These are just four very serious problems arising from the new Bill which only become obvious on a close and detailed reading. MPs who vote for the Bill must recognise that this could result in their constituents – especially older people who are more dependent on the NHS – losing access to hospital medical care, losing proper provision of emergency services or finding themselves stuck with a bill for treatment that used to be provided by the NHS. There are many other flaws, problems and unanswered questions in a Bill which Sajid Javid wanted to delay for further work, and which he was ordered to push forward."

[ends]

Spokespeople are available for interview. Contact Samantha Wathen, Press Officer for Keep Our NHS Public press@keepournhspublic.com or Call/WhatsApp: 0777 6047472

Notes to editors

1. Keep Our NHS Public is a national independent organisation campaigning for a well-funded, publicly owned and provided NHS www.keepournhspublic.com