

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

"An Act of denial that endangers the NHS" - Health and Care Bill to become an Act

Following final discussions in the Commons and the Lords over the last two days, the Health and Care Bill is now due to proceed to Royal Assent and to be brought into law as an act of parliament. The Act will now divide the NHS into over 40 separate units/Integrated Care Systems (ICS) acting virtually autonomously.

Dr Tony O'Sullivan, Co-Chair of Keep Our NHS Public and retired Consultant Paediatrician, said:

"This is an Act of intent, deliberately breaking up the NHS and facilitating the spread of parasitizing private interests, looking to make £billions from funding for public services. It does nothing to address the state of emergency the NHS is now in. The intent is never clearer than in allowing the conflict of interest of private bodies directly (sitting on boards and committees) or indirectly (through provider collaboratives) to influence provision of NHS services. This legislation will drastically worsen the state of emergency by imposing costly and disruptive reconfiguration. The Government has doggedly refused to agree to a regular workforce review, despite 110,000 vacancies and catastrophic staff morale, yet without an adequate workforce the NHS simply cannot deliver safe and compassionate care."

"The Act has now legalised the discharge of patients without a care plan, endangering their ongoing management and safety. The refusal to ensure a statutory duty to provide emergency care for everyone requiring it in an ICS area poses additional significant risks. The Act also allows the Secretary of State to interfere early to determine local reconfigurations including hospital closures, thwarting public consultation, and weakening the say local authorities and councillors have on NHS plans."

"The 'Care' element of the Act is a misnomer, bringing in the grossly inequitable social care cost cap when only direct care costs paid by an individual count to the limit, not the overall cost of their care. Poorer people are more likely to lose all their available resources including their home, whilst the rich keep all but the

first £86,000. This exacerbates social inequalities and disproportionately affects those living in more impoverished parts of the country."

"A clear danger is there for NHS and care workers and trade unions, as the Act will threaten nationally negotiated and protected terms and conditions, and allows the Secretary of State to unilaterally end professional regulations on standards and training of NHS staff. With limited budgets and soaring inflation further eroding already inadequate funding (leading inevitably to swift cuts in services), the battle on the Bill may be over, but the fight for the NHS, for patients and staff must now be more intense than ever."

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Keep Our NHS Public is an independent organisation campaigning for a properly funded and fully publicly owned NHS: <https://keepournhspublic.com/>
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