

Three things when you receive this -

First, if you are concerned about the impact of the Health and Social Care Bill please sign the on-line petition on this link <https://submissions.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/22670> . 100,000 and the issue could be brought back to the House of Commons (here's how such things work <https://submissions.epetitions.direct.gov.uk/how-it-works#commons>). It's not a totally simple process - you have to click on the button, give your details, type in some scrambled code (so they know you are human), wait for a confirmatory e-mail (so they know you are a different human and not someone who's already signed), and then click that link to complete the process - you then get sent a "thank you" confirmation.

But thanks if you can do that, and it would also be much appreciated if, taking care not to do blanket spamming, you could cut and paste (to avoid those annoying >> signs) and send this e-mail on within a day (otherwise it becomes something you don't get round to doing) to friends and family - perhaps just cherry-pick half a dozen people. Then, if they can do the same, and so on and so on, we would in theory get to 10 million signatures within a fortnight. Of course, things don't work like that but even half that number would make the Government sit up and listen.

Then if you're busy - thank you for doing your bit and we'll leave it there.

If you're not convinced, if you've got a bit more time or are deeply concerned go on to "Second" and even "Third" below.

Second (or "First" if you don't know what this is about or have been unconvinced by any arguments you have heard on the matter so far) please take time (15 minutes) to listen to the video on this link <http://vimeo.com/22384946> To quote the summary

*"A film by Anne-Marie Sweeney produced for Keep Our NHS Public and Health Emergency - **Sugar Coating the Bitter Bill**.*

Louise Irvine is a GP in the deprived area of New Cross. She shows how trusted GPs are being used to sugar coat the denationalisation of the NHS, proposed in the government's Health and Social Care Bill.

Dr Irvine explains with care and compassion, how this bitterly unacceptable bill will harm patient care and break up 'the NHS family'.

Simply and without jargon, she makes clear why local GPs will actually have less control over their patients' treatment if it is not scrapped.

Dr Irvine reveals the serious implications that this will have on patient trust.

If you want to know just why so many people in the NHS are in opposition to Lansley's Bill, then take 15 minutes to watch this video. Find out why the bill will be hugely costly to the NHS budget and will seriously damage our health."

Then, if you're now willing to help, please go back to "First" and sign the petition and, if you can do so, pass on this e-mail to a select few friends and family.

If you are still not convinced - thank you nevertheless for watching and reading so far and apologies for the intrusion.

Third - and this is the difficult one. For the bill to fall it needs to be defeated in the Commons and so MPs of every political persuasion need to be convinced that this is a deeply flawed agenda and bad for the NHS and for the country - a matter that transcends party politics.

It could be argued from the Left that the seeds were sown at the very beginning when GPs were not brought into the NHS as employees but allowed to remain as independent contractors (with a powerful professional body protecting their commercial advantage), that Thatcher deliberately ran down the NHS in her years in power, and that this is a Tory/Lib.Dem. Bill. It could be argued from the Right that the endemic problem with the NHS has always been the Union stranglehold on work practices and socialist employment laws favouring the employee that made rooting out inefficiencies impossible, and that it was 13 years of Labour Government that has pushed the NHS further along the path of privatisation. But what's past is past and the blame game will get us nowhere.

Time is short - the Bill returns to the House of Commons in January in the normal course of parliamentary procedure.

Those who receive this who have a labour MP - write to them, e-mail them, go to their surgeries and get the message through that when this issue comes again before the House they need to be there voting against the Bill - if Coalition back-benchers are bold enough to revolt they need the support of the whole of the Labour Parliamentary Party to succeed. Send matters back to the drawing board. The NHS needs reform - it is undeniably too costly to continue the way it is - but this Bill is not the way forward however much it is tinkered with. (And interestingly Lansley's plans started as an ideological change, it is only since the debt crisis that they are being marketed as a money saver too.)

Those who have a Tory/Liberal Democrat MP the task is harder. The Ministers and party Whips will be saying that a defeat or U-turn on this issue could bring down the Coalition Government. If they are open to reason appeal to that - there is lots of detailed argument from the professionals out there (and some of it divorced from any special pleading or political baggage) on just how bad this will be for the NHS and so for all of their constituents at some time in their lives. If they are party loyalists through and through it might also be worth pointing out the probability that when people wake up to the reality of these radical changes, after the event, with the NHS in pieces, those parties who enacted the Bill will be unelectable for a generation.

Good luck, and thank you for reading to the end.