



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

March 2012

Dear Constituent,

You may recall a number of weeks ago signing a postcard in Beeston about the Health and Social Care Bill, entitled "Keep our NHS Public".

I very much wanted to meet with the group who have organised the signing of the cards and asked them for a meeting where I could accept them and discuss the Bill in person. Unfortunately, they refused this offer, but I am glad that they have at least delivered your card to my constituency office this week. If you would like to discuss the Bill with me, then please contact me, as it is an important piece of legislation and unfortunately I feel the debate has been clouded by a great deal of misinformation and I feel many people have been misled about what the Health and Social Care Bill seeks to do.

There are no plans to privatise the NHS or any part of it. I believe in the NHS - paid for by taxation and free when you need to use it. Three generations of my family have worked in the NHS and I use it; both my daughters were born at the QMC and I recently had an operation there.

The very first clause of the Bill sets in law a responsibility on the Secretary of State for Health that he or she must continue to promote, "**a comprehensive health service designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the people of England, and in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness**" which must be, "**free of charge**". Either the people who are running the campaign against the reforms haven't read the Bill or they have and are deliberately misleading people, like you, who care so strongly about the NHS.

The Government's commitment to the NHS is further demonstrated by the fact that we have increased the amount of money going into the NHS budget- even whilst we are having to make cuts to other departments. If anyone tells you the Government is cutting the NHS budget, I am sorry to say they are not being honest with you. By 2015 there will be an extra £12 billion going to the NHS.

Almost everyone agrees that the NHS must change to keep up with the fact that people are living longer. Similarly, as treatments improve they become more complex and more expensive. The Health and Social Care Bill is about making sure we have an NHS that can continue to provide a great National Health Service.

The Bill is complicated and I am not going to pretend that the Government has always done a great job of explaining it. Essentially, it is about shifting power away from administrators to GP's so that they, working with other health professionals like nurses, can make sure people get the very best health care. I believe GP's and nurses in Broxtowe will make better decisions about the needs of patients in our area than administrators based in the north of the County, or in Whitehall. Abolishing Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities will also save a billion pounds a year- money which will remain in the NHS to be spent on healthcare.

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That's why, whatever the spin from the opposition, the overwhelming majority of GP's are already putting the new scheme into operation. People campaigning against the Bill make claims like, "98% of GP's don't want the Bill", but fail to state that this figure is based on a survey in which only 7% of GP's took part. Other surveys are quoted, but the actual number of people taking part in these surveys is very small for such big claims.

The Health and Social Care Bill will also "join up" existing services at a more local level. This is a quite technical part of the legislation, but it means for the first time health and social care will be integrated in Nottinghamshire and in Broxtowe - again putting power with doctors, nurses, social workers and other professionals accountable to our elected representatives.

From the moment the NHS was created private medicine has been part of it; for example, GP's have always been part of that private sector and private business supplies the NHS with everything from bandages to wheel chairs. The last Government opened up the NHS even more to the private sector and most people welcomed the move. But unfortunately Labour skewed the financial side of things so that the private sector received more money (about 11%) for the same treatments provided by the NHS. The Health Bill stops this from happening; now the NHS, charities, not for profit organisations and other private organisations will operate on the same footing.

GP's will continue to be able to get health treatments from both the NHS and the private sector - which includes charities and not for profit organisations. But they will not be able to choose the cheapest treatment - instead, the criteria will mean they will need to choose the the best treatment. And your GP will be able to offer you a choice of where to go to get the best health care you need. So when the opponents of the Bill talk about "competition" what they fail to explain is that a charitable organisation offering a treatment for, say, older patients will "compete" with the NHS offering a similar service on the basis of which one is the best for the patient, not which one is the cheapest.

The other important part of the Bill places a statutory duty on everyone involved in the NHS to reduce what are called "health inequalities", a problem that got worse under the last Government. We know that people in more deprived areas tend to live less healthy and shorter lives than people in more affluent parts of the country. The Bill specifically deals with narrowing that gap so that poorer people get the same service and treatments as people in more prosperous areas.

I think people opposed to the Bill have somewhat taken advantage of people's genuine concerns and heartfelt support for the NHS. I have read the Bill and have listened to the arguments both for and against it, at great length. That is why I will be supporting the Bill when it comes back into the House of Commons and I hope this letter explains to you why I have formed that view.

Thank you again for signing the card, if you would like to discuss the Bill with me then please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Soubry MP