



The NHS Corporate Takeover Bill...

Tips for getting local media coverage

Why is local media important?

Far too few people know about the government's Health & Care Bill (we call it the NHS Corporate Takeover Bill) so it's really important for us to get the word out. MPs really care what gets said about them in the local paper - so a story about their position on the NHS will get their attention and help pressure them into voting the right way. Local outlets will often be quite keen to run stories if you give them all the info they need, so you've a good chance of having an impact with a little bit of effort!

Ideas for getting into the local media:

- Letters to the editor
 - **Why?** This is a great way to have your concerns about the bill shared and it is probably the easiest way to get in the paper.
 - **How?** Most local papers have regular letters to the editor segments - buy a copy of the paper or search online to find it.
 - **Top tips!**
 - Look for a story about the NHS or your MP in the paper and reference that article in your letter - this increases the chances of them including it a lot. You can pivot from the main topic of that story (perhaps delays at the local A&E or your MP opening a new service) to talk about the bill.
 - Keep it brief - make your point in as few words as possible - normally letters to the editor aren't more than 100 or 200 words.
 - Keep it local - reference your local hospital and local MP by name. Make sure they understand why this national story has relevance to their readers.
- A news story
 - **Why?** This is a chance to get a more high profile piece in the paper, with a journalist writing it up - and hopefully asking the MP for a response, forcing them to go public on their position.
 - **How?** You need to have something that counts as news - depending on where you live the bar for what is considered newsworthy will vary. Once you've got an idea (see below for things that might work) find the contact details of your local



media outlets and phone or email their news desk - or directly contact a journalist who has written about NHS stuff before. See below for a template press release you could adapt to send in to local media outlets!

- **Top tips!**
 - The story needs to be something that you can imagine going in a headline eg “Local MP refuses to meet NHS campaigners”; “Campaigners take to Bury streets in opposition to NHS Bill”; “Local MP under pressure to explain vote on ‘NHS Corporate Takeover’ ”
 - To do this you might need to do something to help make the story - ask for a meeting, hold a campaign stall etc. Think about how what’s happened matters to people in your area. For example, if your MP tells you they support the bill then the story might be - Leeds NHS users are angry at their local MP’s support for “dangerous” reforms of the health service.
 - A great picture is a very good way of getting a story like this some more coverage - take pictures of your actions, especially close ups of people’s faces on a stall with some posters or campaign material in the background.
 - Reaching out to a local journalist on Twitter is a good way to get a response. Try finding someone who has written about these kinds of issues in the past for a local paper and DM them or send them a twitter with their handle at the start of the tweet.
- A personal story
 - **Why?** Explaining why you are campaigning on the Health & Care Bill because of a personal experience of NHS care you’ve had is a very powerful way of building support for the campaign.
 - **How?** If you are happy to speak publicly about NHS care you or a loved one have had (good or bad) then reach out to the local paper and explain your story. Tell them who you are, briefly and emotively explain your NHS story, and set out why you’re so worried about the NHS bill, including the potential impact on the local NHS.
 - **Top tips!**
 - When telling your story, think about how the experience made you feel - what details about what you experienced will help readers relate to your experience.
 - Link what has happened to you to the bill and your local NHS - how might these changes affect other NHS users that read this paper?
 - Be prepared to share or have them take a photo of you for use in the story.
 - Explain why you are campaigning and what you want the local MP to do.



Other top tips!

- Prep a few key critical bits of info that help the paper to understand why this is important:
 - There is a parliamentary vote coming up soon & it will transform the NHS - handing private companies decision making power in the health service
 - What this could mean for your local NHS - for example it will mean a big reorganisation in the NHS when the hospital and other health services are already completely overwhelmed. Lives are at stake.
 - Your local MP voted for/against the bill last time - they are betraying the NHS if they vote in favour of it next time.
- Find the contact details of local media outlets - these can usually be found on websites, social media or in the physical copies of newspapers/magazines. You can try their news desk email address, or perhaps identify one of their journalists and email or direct message them on Twitter.
- Keep it simple and flag that it is a national story with local impacts.
- If you have a few local papers it's best to send individual emails to each outlet, so that you can personalise the greeting.
- Try hard to get some good photos of any actions you've done and include them!
- Follow up on your email with a phone call if possible.

Example copy for press release on a street stall:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Local campaigners took to the streets of [LOCATION] to demand [NAME] MP votes down NHS Bill

Local campaigners were out in [LOCATION] on [DATE] calling on [NAME] MP to vote down the government's latest NHS bill which they describe as an "NHS Corporate Takeover". Holding banners and placards they collected signatures opposing the legislation which will hand power in the NHS to private companies.

The legislation, currently making its way through parliament, will allow private healthcare companies to sit on NHS boards and make key decisions about the care that NHS patients receive. The campaigners, from the patient-led group Just Treatment, claimed this is a huge reorganisation of the NHS that will do nothing to improve patient care, just when the NHS is straining to cope with the consequences of COVID, long term underfunding, and staff shortages.



In July, local MP, [NAME], voted [in support of the government to back the bill/against the government to try to stop the bill] but there are more votes expected in the Autumn before it becomes law, and campaigners hope they can build enough pressure to defeat the government.

[NAME], from [LOCATION] who joined the protest, said: [Quote from organiser on why you're taking action and what you want MPs to do - this is the key place to get in more subjective / emotive language about the NHS and why you care!]

[NAME], from [LOCATION] who helped to organise the protest, said: [Quote talking about the threat the bill and corporate control poses to the NHS, and how and why people in your area can get involved - sign their local petition at justtreatment.org/stopthenhsbill/!]

Organisers have taken a number of actions in recent weeks and months to mobilise people against the government's NHS bill, including demonstrations in dozens of towns and cities across the country.

The NHS bill has completed the parliamentary committee stage, with the critical next vote in the House of Commons expected in the coming month. The bill passed its second reading back in July, with 3 Conservative MPs rebelling to vote against the government alongside the Labour Party, Lib Dems, and Greens. Campaigners urged everyone in [LOCATION] to write to MP XXX urging them to fight this attack on the NHS.

ENDS

CONTACT: [EMAIL ADDRESS] / [PHONE NUMBER]

About the NHS Bill:

The government's Health and Care Bill, introduced in parliament on 6th July 2021, has been widely condemned by healthcare professionals and campaigners. It sets out a range of reforms for the NHS that, if implemented, would mean:

- Private companies sitting on NHS boards making decisions about what healthcare patients receive
- Reduced scrutiny over NHS contracts awarded to corporations
- Decisions made at a regional level - with private companies having a major say - which would result in different services and standards of care across the country
- More power concentrated in Westminster in the hands of the Health Secretary



About Just Treatment:

[Just Treatment](#) started in 2017, with the aim of building a powerful, patient-led campaign to take on the big pharmaceutical companies that rip off the NHS and price medicines so high the people who need them can't get them. Just Treatment has won victories on breast cancer and cystic fibrosis - forcing the government and drug companies to back down, helping thousands of patients access lifesaving medication they'd been denied. During the COVID crisis, Just Treatment set out to expand its campaigning work to fight the politicians and corporations intent on picking apart the NHS. After a huge nationwide crowdsourcing effort, the NHS New Deal was launched.

For more updates, follow Just Treatment on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).