

PRESS RELEASE

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Lansley challenged as alleged leak echoes concerns over Health Bill

Campaigners are demanding Health Secretary Andrew Lansley confirm or deny the truth of an alleged leak from the document that his Department of Health has been suppressing in defiance of rulings by the Information Commissioner.

A new blog post, by a pro-Labour critic who claims to have seen the document, reports that among the issues raised by the 'Risk Register' compiled by DH officials more than a year ago:

- Warnings that Lansley's controversial top-down reorganization of the NHS could "spark a surge in health care costs"
- The possibility that the extra costs of bringing in more private sector could make the NHS "unaffordable"
- The fear that GPs – who are to be nominally in charge of "commissioning" (purchasing) services worth upwards of £60 billion a year through "Clinical Commissioning Groups" – lack experience and skills in managing costs.

These warnings of potential risks in the Bill echo criticisms raised ever since Lansley's proposals were first put forward. But the Risk Register has been withheld from MPs and peers voting on each stage of the Bill, and from the so-called 'Future Forum' on the Bill, despite two rulings by the Information Commissioner – upholding Freedom of Information Act requests from the *Evening Standard* and former shadow Health Secretary John Healey – and calling on the DH to release it.

A defiant Lansley has now dragged the process out further by appealing against the Commissioner's ruling, with a Tribunal hearing now scheduled for next month, AFTER key votes in the House of Lords, which will turn its attention back to the Bill next week.

Dr John Lister, Director of campaign group Health Emergency, said:

"If true, this leak confirms that Mr Lansley has been hiding serious warnings from MPs, even while he dismisses critics raising these very points. It is likely that this leak could now be followed by others – and I challenge Mr Lansley to stop wasting time and set the record straight: he must confirm or deny the substance of this leak, and publish the Risk Register without further delay.

"For twelve whole months he has denied MPs and peers information they needed to form a proper evaluation of the Bill. He has even admitted his fears that publication could swing opinion against his unpopular and controversial proposals. If this leak is false, what is he so determined to hide from us?"

The leak coincides with the publication of a new Briefing by campaigners 'Unpicking the Spin' of the government's presentation of the Bill, and refuting claims that it would save money, give local control over health services, put GPs and clinicians in charge, empower patients or improve outcomes.

Dr Lister said:

"Time is running out for the media, the public and many of our politicians to wake up to the real focus of this apparently complex Bill: the creation of a competitive health care market that would be costly, divisive, bureaucratic and unfair. Above all, it's a Bill to empower the private sector, not patients or clinicians. That's why the Bill cannot be amended. It must be defeated or withdrawn."

FURTHER DETAILS: the blog leak can be found at <http://eoin-clarke.blogspot.com/2012/02/andrew-lansley-covers-up-nhs-report.html>

- The Briefing from Public Health for the NHS is attached (pdf), or available from john.lister@virgin.net
- **Dr JOHN LISTER** can also be contacted on **07774 264112**.