**Social Media Guide ||** Challenging Charging in Healthcare

**#PatientsNotPassports**

**Campaign Overview**

Recently, the Government has proposed to amend a set of rules, known as the ‘NHS Charging Regulations,’ which govern how people access healthcare in England and when they have to pay for it. The most recent changes include firstly an extension of healthcare charges to community care settings – which are often commissioned specifically to reach marginalised communities and individuals. Secondly, they include an obligation to check every patient’s paperwork to identify who is eligible for free care and charge up-front those who are not, refusing non-urgent care where a patient cannot pay. We are concerned that the impact of these changes will be:

* More vulnerable people deterred from accessing treatment, even where the current regime allows them to access free care, such as for refugees and asylum-seekers;
* Confusion and chaos around eligibility for free healthcare;
* Essential services removed from hard-to-reach communities;
* An increase in health inequalities among the general population;
* Preventive care programmes which protect us all will be undermined, putting public health at risk;
* Increase in patient waiting times due to additional administrative burden of checking eligibility for free care;
* Increased cost to the NHS, as it’s likely the charging scheme will cost more to administer than any potential savings;
* Doctors forced to act as border guards, preventing them from working ethically and humanely;
* The only way to check eligibility fairly, is to check everyone – a huge administrative burden and frustrating for patients and staff alike. In reality, the policy will mean patients are singled out for eligibility checks, leading to racial profiling and discrimination.
* Represents a further departure from the founding vision of the NHS which guaranteed universal access based on need not ability to pay.

These regulations have been laid before Parliament and will become law without debate unless there is an objection from either House. We’re campaigning to raise awareness about these changes, in communities and among MPs, and secure a debate in Parliament which would help ensure that these substantial changes receive an appropriate level of scrutiny.

You can support the campaign by spreading the word on your social media channels using #PatientsNotPassports. Below are suggested tweets and posts but feel free to adapt and the highlight the messages that you think are most important, including by drawing on the above. You can link to web pages from [Asylum Matters (via the City of Sanctuary site)](https://health.cityofsanctuary.org/2017/08/31/changes-to-accessing-healthcare-impact-on-refugees-asylum-seekers-take-action-now), [Docs Not Cops](http://www.docsnotcops.co.uk/), [Doctors of the World](https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=00e4866c-1196-49df-98e3-4404342ac870), and [National Aids Trust](http://www.nat.org.uk/) with more info on the changes and options for taking action. Soon we’ll have a campaign action targeting MPs specifically for sharing as well.

**Social Media Content Suggestions**

**TWEETS**

Nobody should be denied the healthcare they need. Stand up for an #NHS for all bit.ly/2wrObsh #PatientsNotPassports

Nurses check pulses, not passports. Nobody should ever be denied the healthcare they need. #PatientsNotPassports

Doctors check IVs, not IDs. Nobody should ever be denied the healthcare they need. #PatientsNotPassports

Doctors are not border guards. Let them work ethically and humanely. #NHS #PatientsNotPassports

"For if the sheep are to be separated from the goats both must be classified” NHS Founder on identifying visitors. #PatientsNotPassports

Proposed changes to healthcare charging put vulnerable people at risk – read more [link] #PatientsNotPassports

Proposed changes to healthcare charging undermine preventative care programmes and put us all at risk #PatientsNotPassports

Proposed changes to healthcare remove vital services from the marginalised communities many are commissioned to reach #PatientsNotPassports

@YourMP Will you oppose changes to accessing healthcare that will increase confusion and patient waiting times? #patientsnotpassports

@YourMP Have you seen changes to accessing healthcare that risk undermining public health? [link] #PatientsNotPassports

@YourMP Proposed changes will cause confusion in the #NHS & risk increasing patient waiting times. What can you do? #PatientsNotPassports

**Docs Not Cops March – Patients Not Passports – 30 September**

On 30th September Docs Not Cops along with a coalition of anti-racism and pro-migrant organisations are marching on a London location to protest the introduction of immigration checks and upfront charging for all NHS patients and to share stories highlighting the human impact of these changes. Please help promote the march to your followers and join us all to call on the government to see [#PatientsNotPassports](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/patientsnotpassports), stop scapegoating migrants, and to fully fund the NHS. You can find more information about the march [here](https://www.facebook.com/events/1916054882049398/?ti=as). Help promote the event by [tweeting](https://twitter.com/DocsNotCops/status/904409926386290688).

**Visuals**

   

