

14. End private sector involvement in our NHS

Around one fifth of the NHS budget is now spent on clinical services from private companies with some Integrated Care Boards spending an even higher proportion of their budget. This is wasteful and damaging to patient care. Public funds spent with private companies flow out of the NHS and lead to underinvestment in NHS staff and equipment. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the NHS paying the independent sector for operations is a form of privatisation. The 2012 Health and Social Care Act encouraged more contracting out and the 2022 Health and Care Act made it even easier, with less scrutiny. PFI contracts also drain budgets and management consultancies influence spending plans, while their reports are private and obstruct public accountability.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS?

- Spending on clinical services from the private sector increased by 23% from 2013/4-2018
- Around 230 private companies are accredited to develop integrated care systems: some are US owned with a history of corrupt practices drawing heavy fines
- NHS organisations, increasingly dependent on Big Tech, are being pushed to sign deals with private companies to share our data; this is encouraged in new legislation that weakens our data privacy, and promotes market-led service development
- Private companies restrict patient access to protect profits and abandon NHS contracts when their profits fall
- Outsourcing NHS services to private companies is associated with lower quality, less safe care; some contracts are given despite a poor company track record
- Outsourcing means staff terms and conditions are less protected; continuity of care is more difficult; providers are less accountable
- Market reforms in the NHS have considerably increased admin costs
- Comparing 11 nations' health services' performance up to 2015, including equity and access, the UK was rated top, but has fallen to 4th through delayed access to treatment and lack of investment
- Nearly all private hospitals have no emergency provision: when procedures go wrong or there are complications patients are rescued by NHS hospitals - at the taxpayers' expense
- The private sector does not have spare capacity to support the NHS

WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN NOW?

- Bring back outsourced services into the NHS
- Reinvest resources wasted through private sector involvement back into patient care
- Restore a fully public NHS