



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

10th May 2021

Dear Constance,

RE: PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE NHS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about private sector involvement in the NHS, such as Centene. I have read your comments with interest.

I fully believe in our NHS and its values, which is why I welcome that the Government has guaranteed that the NHS will always provide healthcare free at the point of delivery, regardless of ability to pay. Let me be abundantly clear: the Government will never privatise the NHS.

The use of private providers and the voluntary sector in the delivery of NHS services is not a new concept, with the previous Labour Government introducing the independent sector and competition into the NHS between 1997 and 2010.

The NHS is something to be valued and protected, which is why I support the commitment to properly funding the NHS. Since 2010, the NHS budget has increased every year, and I am happy to say that despite challenging financial circumstances, the annual budget of the NHS is being increased by £33.9 billion in real terms by 2023/24, which has been enshrined in law.

With regard to general practitioners (GPs) offering private services, I recognise this is of deep concern to many people. As independent contractors, GPs are free to provide a variety of other services outside of their contractual requirements, which successive governments have regarded as private matters between the patient and their GP. I am glad that there are strict safeguards within their contracts which prevent GPs charging patients for NHS care, or from using NHS resources to subsidise any private services in which they may be involved.

While I acknowledge your specific concerns about Centene's involvement in GP surgeries, patient care will not be affected, and all services remain free at the point of delivery. As with all GP services, those for which Centene is responsible will continue to be regulated and inspected by the Care Quality Commission. I understand that the Clinical Commissioning Groups where this has happened have followed the appropriate and robust processes prior to transfer of responsibility to Centene. As I have explained, the NHS has always involved a mixture of public and private provision, and it is absolutely not for sale to private providers.



Competition in the NHS should act as a means to an end in improving services for patients, never as an end in itself.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

With best wishes,
Tom

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**