



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

### **Response to the National Health Service Bill**

Thank you for contacting me about the National Health Service Bill (previously called the 'NHS Reinstatement Bill'), proposed by Caroline Lucas MP.

I would first like to clarify that the date fixed for the debate on this Bill, Friday 11 March, was one set aside for the discussion of 'Private Member's Bills'. These are proposed laws sponsored by backbench Members of Parliament, and very few of these ever have a real chance of becoming law. The NHS Bill proposed by Caroline Lucas would need to pass not just one, but a series of votes in both Houses of Parliament before the end of the current Parliamentary session in May. For this reason, it is impossible that the Bill would have time to complete its progress, even had it passed a vote on this occasion.

The House of Commons does not normally sit on a Friday, and it is usual practice for MPs to set aside Fridays for constituency engagements. On 11 March, I held my regular advice surgery in my Crewe office, planned long in advance, in addition to a number of other local meetings. For this reason, I was not able to attend the House of Commons to participate in the debate on the NHS Bill.

Turning to the Bill itself, I can absolutely appreciate concerns about the future of the NHS. However, I would like to reassure you that the Government is committed to the NHS: not only protecting it, but increasing our spending on it and reforming the way it works, so that (for example) there are more doctors and fewer managers. I believe that the Health Service, there for everyone who needs it, funded through general taxation, and free at the point of delivery is something we must value and cherish.

The proposed Bill, though well-intentioned, would be an unnecessary upheaval and the wrong approach to improving the NHS. You may be interested to know that an authoritative comparative study of the performance of different national health systems recently concluded that the NHS is the best health service in the world.

I can assure you that concerns about the 'privatisation' of the NHS are unfounded. The Government will not privatise the NHS.

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The use of private providers in the delivery of some NHS services is not a new concept. The Labour Government between 1997 and 2010 introduced the independent sector and competition into the NHS. The NHS and the independent sector have worked in partnership for many years, to provide good quality care to patients, which is the most important priority.

To put into perspective the use of private providers in the NHS, services provided by independent organisations and companies represent today around 6 pence in every pound the NHS spends. This is an increase of just one penny since 2010, when 5 pence in the pound of NHS spending went on private provision. Charities and social enterprises, such as Macmillan nurses, continue to play an important role in the NHS, as they have done for many years.

The Government's action on the NHS is ensuring that more money is spent on patient care, not administration, and we are investing over £7 billion extra funding in real terms in the health service during the last Parliament. There are now 1.3 million more operations being delivered each year compared to 2010, 10,700 more doctors and almost 11,800 more nurses. I am also proud that the Prime Minister has promised to increase investment in this Parliament with more than £10 billion of additional NHS spending in real terms, each year, by 2020/21. This means that spending on the NHS will rise in every year in real terms.

In my view, giving operational control for the day-to-day running of services to local doctors was the right decision as they have the best understanding of their patients and local needs. Nonetheless, the Government has always been clear that Ministers are responsible for the NHS, and I am proud of its performance in challenging circumstances.

I hope that this information is of reassurance. Thank you, once again, for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,



**Edward Timpson MP**