

Co-operation and Competition Panel
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

Dear Panel,

Re: Draft Interim Guidelines

The issue is really very simple. Those who supported the present government at the last election voted for a publicly-run, publicly-funded, publicly-accountable National Health Service. They voted against a service run for private profit.

To the extent that the government is now exerting central pressure on Primary Care Trusts to put services out to tender to private companies, including making it difficult for non-profit groups such as local doctors to tender successfully, it is acting in direct breach of the platform on which it was elected. It is doing this while saying nothing, having no parliamentary debate, not admitting to any change of policy.

If you want to know why people distrust this government and no longer wish it to continue, you need look no further.

What is wrong with medicine for private profit? It opens the door to the sort of power-plays seen in the United States, where large corporations are able gradually to squeeze more and more profit out of reducing services. We have seen this in miniature here already, in the low standards of hospital cleaning and catering which evolved when these services were sub-contracted to private firms by the previous government.

I do not want our NHS services, of which I have long experience due to my daughter's history of kidney failure, dialysis, and transplants, to be degraded by this reckless policy. I fear its effects. I have no faith that 'competition will drive up standards', as it is obvious that it can do just the opposite. The service depends on teamwork and cooperation among medical professionals.

If competition is thought to be necessary in some areas, then gather the evidence and run a pilot program, and evaluate it. The current initiative is not evidence-based, it is ideology-based – 'private must be better than public'. I repeat: This is not the policy on which the government was elected. Please slow down, evaluate first, then take action in a gradual manner, with proper continuing assessment. Do not risk the future of our precious NHS on gambles which may go disastrously wrong.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs.) Jeanne Warren