



April 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about private sector involvement in the NHS, such as Centene.

I fully believe in our NHS and its values, and this 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 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 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 a 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 GP. There are strict safeguards within their contracts which prevent GPs charging patients for NHS care, or from using NHS resources to subsidise any private service in which they may be involved.

I understand that there questions being raised 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. The CCGs where this has happened have followed the appropriate and robust processes prior to transfer of responsibility to Centene. 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.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**  
Member of Parliament for Daventry  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA  
Tel: 020 7219 7048

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris".

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**