

Mike Bowden has written this excellent letter to Sarah Wollaston in her capacity of chair of the House of Commons Health Committee. Please feel free to use it as a base for your own letter. Individual letters always have more clout than mere circulars.

To: sarah.wollaston.mp@parliament.uk

Subject: NHS consultation

Dear Dr Wollaston,

I was a government procurement specialist for 30 years, 18 in the NHS, with extensive experience and knowledge of both UK and overseas services.

I am appalled at the way government is breaking down the most efficient and effective health system in the world, a system envied by those working in health in many other countries including in the USA. The result of the changes has been to increase admin costs from below 5% to over 15% and heading for 20%. USA admin costs are 27%. Do we want that? Can we afford it?

Briefly,

First, the NHS works best as an integrated service that sorts priorities and solutions itself.

Second, for most health activities forecasting demand is imprecise. Basically you know the general level of demand and set up a facility to cope. The facility then works flexibly internally and with other facilities to cope with demand variations, both total volume and mix.

Things like the internal market break this best arrangement completely. Having to put out to tender and take the lowest is very destructive of the organisations structure and efficiency. I have regularly seen lowest tenders become very expensive when variations crop up. Additional costs that would be absorbed easily where work is done internally.

At 85 I remember my family having to see if we could afford to see the doctor. I also remember how the GP, hospital, convalescence and care services were integrated from 1945 to 1980. How sad to see it regress so much.

Another thing that has a serious adverse effect is the loss of expertise on the buying side. I was an international expert and the U.K. expert in my field. I was retired early in 1987 because the drive was to reduce civil service numbers. A vacuum was left and I sadly watched private enterprise take advantage. This has been repeated in many other fields. I have a high regard for private enterprise but they do need limiting and guidance on aims.

There is no doubt that political interference in detail organisation has broken an excellent system. A politician cannot micro manage a specialist service. Junior doctors pay and terms of service are a matter between the doctors and their employers.

Looked at coldly the conclusion that the government is set on privatising the NHS for ulterior motives is almost irresistible.

I hope your enquiry can find away to restore the internally based control the NHS had so that the NHS has full flexibility to determine and control it's own path.

Yours sincerely,

M. J. Bowden. CEng. MIMechE.