

Competition in the NHS: Busting the myths

The NHS Confederation is publishing a series of myth busters, which challenge common misconceptions and enrich debate on topical, sometimes controversial, issues regarding our health and care. The second in this series dispels myths about the role of competition in the NHS.

Myth:

Large parts of the NHS are being privatised.

Reality:

The NHS has contracted with a range of non-publicly-owned providers for decades, including the independent sector, charities, social enterprises and mutuals. The percentage of NHS services delivered by the independent sector has grown slowly over this period. In 2013/14, **6.1% of all NHS services were delivered by the independent sector** – an increase of 1.7% in the past five years.¹



Myth:

GPs are putting everything out to tender.

Reality:

Current rules state that no one can pursue competition in the NHS if it is not in the interests of patients.² **Any tendering of services must be open and transparent** for the public to understand. A *British Medical Journal* study indicated that 5.5% of contracts were subject to a competitive tender since April 2013.



Myth:

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) opens the door to wholesale privatisation of the NHS.

Reality:

According to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and statements from the European Commission, TTIP **will not change the way that the NHS or other public services are run.**³ There has been no firm agreement on TTIP and negotiations are still underway between the EU and the USA.



Myth:

The public think that care should only be provided by NHS providers.

Reality:

Two in three people (67%) say that they do not mind if health services are provided by a private company or the NHS **as long as they remain free of charge.**⁴

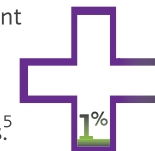


Myth:

NHS hospitals are treating more private patients.

Reality:

There is an overall cap at 49% of a hospital's income which can be generated from private patients. Since the cap was introduced, there has not been a significant increase in private patient income. In 2013/14, **1% of all hospital income came from private patient activities.**⁵



Myths

Reality



NHS Confederation view:

The NHS Confederation supports the use of competition in the NHS where it is in the interests of patients and the taxpayer. We welcome a diverse mix of health providers as a means of **innovating and improving quality of care**. Competition should never be an end in itself – **it is a tool to improve care**. Clinical commissioning groups, which are led by GPs, are best placed to use their clinical expertise to judge when it should be used **in the interests of patients**.

www.nhsconfed.org
[@nhsconfed](https://twitter.com/nhsconfed)

1 Written Parliamentary Answer (218445), 16 Dec 2014
2 Substantive guidance on the Procurement, Patient Choice and Competition Regulations, Monitor, Dec 2013

3 Separating Myth from Fact, NHS European Office; Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP): separating myth from fact, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills Guidance, July 2014
European Commission letter to House of Commons Health Select Committee, 11 Dec 2014

4 ComRes polling 30 June 2014
5 NHS Foundation Trusts: Consolidated Accounts 2013/14, Monitor, July 2014