

Sale of NHS Professionals: Briefing for MPs



We are asking MPs to oppose the sale of NHS Professionals by signing Early Day Motion 152. We are also asking MPs to express their opposition to the sale by speaking directly with the Department of Health and the ministers responsible: Jeremy Hunt, the Health Secretary, and Philip Dunne, Minister of State for Health. We would be grateful if MPs would report back to us on the responses they receive from the Department.

What is NHS Professionals?

NHS Professionals provides temporary staff to roughly a quarter of NHS Trusts. It recruits for part-time and flexible work from a bank of 88,000 healthcare professionals. The organisation allows Trusts to cheaply recruit healthcare workers, avoiding expensive private recruitment agencies.

The organisation was established in 2001 as a response to the high costs of reliance on private staffing agencies. It became a Special Health Authority in 2004, and in 2010 became a company owned entirely by the Department of Health.

NHS Professionals is estimated to save the NHS £70 million per year by removing the need for external recruitment agencies.

In 2010 the coalition government moved to privatise NHS Professionals, but the plan was dropped. There was further talk of a sell off in 2014.

The sale

The government has put up 74.9% of NHS Professionals for sale, and may sell off the remaining share in the next three to five years. Whoever wins the bid will control the organisation. This could easily lead to higher costs for Trusts using NHS Professionals, and/or reduced quality in the recruitment service.

The sale is being arranged at the Department of Health by Ben Masterson, Deputy Commercial Director and Head of Companies Management, in consultation with Deloitte. We are aware that Staffline, a recruitment agency, have put forward a bid. We also believe that the investment group Aurelius Equity Opportunities is another potential buyer, but this is unconfirmed.

Sources

NHS Professionals Website <https://www.nhsprofessionals.nhs.uk/>

'NHS staffing agency moves towards privatisation', *Financial Times*, 26/06/17
<https://www.ft.com/content/5bc8444a-5979-11e7-9bc8-8055f264aa8b>

'Staffline tables bid for NHS nurses agency amid privatisation row', *Sky News*, 20/05/17
<http://news.sky.com/story/staffline-tables-bid-for-nhs-nurses-agency-amid-privatisation-row-10885313>