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Contracts Worth Billions Offered

The value of NHS contracts advertised has tripled to £13 billion in the year since the Health and Social Care Act came into force. Of the contracts awarded in this period, 68% have gone private.

The statistics of accelerating privatisation have been collected by the NHS Support Federation. It points out that the range of clinical treatments covered by contract notices has almost doubled from 44 to 77 since 2012.

The figures from the NHS Support Federation were quoted by Dr Gerard Reissman in arguing for a motion opposing privatisation at the recent Local Medical Committees conference of GPs. GP Magazine reported that the conference voted for a campaign in favour of an entirely public sector-provided NHS.

The Local Medical Committees are part of the British Medical Association of hospital and general practitioners. The BMA has hardened its views on the Health and Social Care Act over the past year. Most recently it has launched a petition demanding the repeal of the Act.

The BMA's petition is on the Government's e-petition website at

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/64407> .

It is in the name of medical student Will Sapwell who said: "I'm left pondering whether the NHS I intend to work for as a consultant or GP will bear any resemblance to the NHS I am graduating into." The petition has gathered just under 4,000 signatures in its first month. More promotion and support of the initiative seems to be needed.

Profit across the board

In its report on the growth of privatisation, the NHS Support Federation notes that even accident and emergency and blue light ambulance services are succumbing despite in the past not being thought susceptible to commercial takeover.

Major contracts now being offered to the market include:

- A ten-year deal worth £1.2 billion for cancer services and care of the terminally ill in Staffordshire.
- A five-year £800 million contract for older people's services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, to be decided by September.
- A £5 billion contract for commissioning support services offered by NHS England, which is particularly significant because it will place private sector organisations at the heart of the commissioning processes, like the fox being put in charge of redesigning the hen house.

The Federation also highlights a £200 million fund which private sector consultancies are accessing to provide guidance to NHS hospitals judged to be "failing".