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NHS Privatisation:

The NHS is our greatest institution, established 75 years ago to provide universal healthcare free at the point of use. I am committed to upholding its founding principles as a comprehensive, integrated, and public NHS that is there for all of us when we need it: a right afforded to everyone regardless of ability to pay.

Many people are understandably concerned at the serious pressures facing our NHS. Despite the heroic efforts of staff, waiting lists have risen to over seven million and hundreds of thousands of people are waiting longer than a year for treatment. On all measures, patients are waiting longer than ever before. Ministers point to the impact of COVID-19. But we entered the pandemic with record waiting lists and 100,000 staff vacancies.

Building an NHS fit for the future is my priority, reforming health and care services to speed up treatment, focus on prevention, and reduce health inequalities. We must build capacity in the NHS – providing it with the staff and resources it needs - so that all patients are treated on time again.

But I believe we have a responsibility in the short term to utilise spare capacity in the private sector to get through the current crisis and bring down NHS waiting lists. Nobody should be left languishing in serious pain, while those who can afford to, pay to go private. That is the two-tier healthcare system that I and my colleagues want to end.

In the long term, I want the NHS to be so good that people never have to go private. There is, in my view, an incompatibility between the aims of private companies and the aims of the NHS. We must end the reliance on outsourcing and the cronyism that, in my view, saw our public services weakened in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and instead build resilience in the NHS, making sure every penny of taxpayers' money is spent wisely.

Nye Bevan – who spearheaded the creation of the NHS - said in 1948 that “this service must always be changing, growing and improving”. I support a 10-year plan of investment and reform that seeks to do just that: dealing with the root causes and immediate challenges while building an NHS that is fit for the future.

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