

## The choice to put the book-keeping of a balanced budget...

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It [shocks me to read this sort](#) of report in the FT:

*The NHS has faced crisis before but this one is of a different order. It is estimated that it will have to fill a funding gap of close to £30bn a year by 2020. Financial failure is now deeply embedded across the entire system, afflicting prestigious hospitals and notorious laggards alike with about two-thirds of all UK hospitals forecast to be in the red by April 2016 according to the King's Fund. Their deficits look set to hit more than £2bn by the end of the financial year.*

Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, a world-leading research centre, is in chaos this week, having lost its senior management and heading for special measures for the reasons noted above.

But let's be clear: I am not shocked by the deficits. I am not shocked by people resigning. I am not shocked by supposed financial failure. What shocks me is that there are people who think it appropriate to underfund the NHS in this way.

The NHS is very lean. Not perfect, but within the constraints of being a human led organisation meeting real human need, it's very good.

And in that real world these budget deficits and this funding crisis is not then a matter of people being profligate. Or of working so inefficiently. Or failing.

These deficits are instead the measure of an economic mantra that will not provide enough money to fund health care.

That thinks that the wholly unnecessary accounting goal of technically balancing its books is more important than people's lives and well-being.

That is denying people care because shrinking the state is more important than making people better.

We can fund the NHS. We have the underemployed and unemployed people in this

country to put to work to do that. And we can train them. But we are being told, by some, that this cannot be done. And the reason is not because of any real constraint. Or any need. Or any threat to the economic stability of the country. It's just choice: the choice to put the book-keeping of a balanced budget above caring for the sick.

It's that choice that shocks me.