

## Getting the NHS ready for a bout of private capital

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The [FT has reported](#) that:

*Hospitals in England are becoming increasingly dependent on short-term handouts to maintain day-to-day services, putting a question mark over the long-term sustainability of the National Health Service, parliament's spending watchdog said on Wednesday.*

*A National Audit Office report also suggested that capital funding shortfalls at hospitals and other parts of the NHS could be putting patient safety at risk.*

*The findings underline the scale of the task facing prime minister Boris Johnson, who has made the NHS his number one political priority and trumpeted "record" sums going into the service.*

Superficially this appears to be yet another of those 'NHS in crisis' articles that are a feature of this time of the year. And, of course, that might just be true. If we had a government truly committed to the NHS then everyone could presume that this story simply reflects the ever increasing demand on the NHS of an ageing and growing population who expect the the best care that is available from modern medicine and simply move on.

But that is not the sort of government we have. We have a government that believes in balancing its budget, however irrational that might be.

And it has many exponents of the 'small state' within it.

The prime minister has in addition, without either rhyme nor reason, demanded that all departments find 5% of spending that they can cut.

And worse, we know that this is a government made up of many people who are dedicated to privatisation.

Add all that up and, not unreasonably I read a story like this and then, I believe wholly appropriately, think it is a very useful piece that the Cabinet Office is delighted to note

as evidence that what the NHS needs is a bout of private capital so that all the easy bits on which a rate of return can be guaranteed by employing staff exclusively trained by the state can be delivered by chums from US healthcare corporations with a nice fat profit margin being earned.

Of course I may be wrong.

And of course Johnson has sworn this will never happen.

But then, he also says he's dedicated to a free press. And even the Daily Mail no longer believes him on that. So why believe him on anything else?