Funding the Future

The private sector cannot deliver an NHS. When will pol...

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This caught my eye in the FT yesterday:

> **Centene to sell GP clinics and hospitals in exit from UK market**
>
> US health insurer faced anti-privatisation protests and hospital integration proved tricky

As the report notes:

US health insurer Centene is selling its chain of GP clinics, as well as the biggest private hospital group in the UK, as it abandons ambitious plans to make inroads into Britain's healthcare system.

In total, the company will be selling 60 GP surgeries. It has already sold the Circle/BMI UK hospital chain.

I was amused at the reasons given for these sales. Apart from the protests (which I suspect the company would have lived through if there was money to be made), it offered a number of excuses.

The first was that GP practices were only for sale in poorer areas and they were having difficulty getting GPs to work there. No surprise there then: this has always been true in the NHS.

Then they noted that their hospitals by and large were located in well-off areas. Again, no surprise there.

Linking these two issues, they noted that in that case there was little chance for their GP surgeries to refer to their private hospitals.

And, much to their surprise it seems, they had also found that less well-off patients were not that keen on saying for private hospital treatment.

In other words, there was no integration at all between their GP and hospital activities and neither prospered as they wished as a result.

My conclusions are threefold.

First, if they had not worked this out in advance, more fools them.

Second, this makes very clear how poor a profit motive is in the planning for healthcare.

Third, nothing will change this, which is why a government-coordinated and nationally supplied NHS is vital.

But will Wes Streeting take note of that? I am sure he will not.