



## STATEMENT: FOUNDATION HOSPITALS



I am deeply concerned that the proposal to establish foundation hospitals will itself destroy the foundations the NHS was built upon. It will create a premier league of asset rich hospitals surrounded by a nationwide league of hospitals struggling to survive. As in football, it will exacerbate the health and wealth divides rather than narrow them.

The 'reform' of the Conservatives turned our health service into an expensive transactional shambles. Labour instincts and Labour values have always said "fair shares for all". Granting Foundation status to selected hospitals will inevitably produce winners and losers - and where the losers are the patients. This surely goes against Labour instincts and turns Labour values on their head. It takes us back toward the unequal quality of care the NHS has done so much to

improve. Entrepreneurial Foundation hospital trusts will compete for contracts, concentrating on the elective work, which brings the best cash returns. This will be to the detriment of people needing longer-term care who are by far the great majority of patients. Commercial pressures will become a powerful lever on clinical management. Unifying hospital, primary care and public health into coordinated locality health planning then becomes a distant dream. This will be made even worse if, as we are told, all hospitals will achieve Foundation status in five years. After five disruptive years our health service will no longer be "national" and will be operating a market-based system, setting hospital against hospital. As NHS doctors and consultants have already said, "the proposed legislation for Foundation hospitals is misconceived, a distortion that will squander resources, time and goodwill and will seriously threaten the future of the NHS." For these reasons, I am fundamentally opposed to proposals that can only take us away from the health equality goals of the NHS.