

Labour attacks the GP partnership

I see nothing wrong with the idea that GP s form partnerships, finance their own surgeries, can run their own pharmacies and have a contract to supply services free to patients paid for out of taxation via the NHS budget.

It was decided by the post war government not to nationalise doctor practices in order to secure their agreement to the idea of the NHS. It left GP s free to offer private services in addition to the work they do for the NHS. It means we have thousands of GP small businesses innovating, offering variations of service and providing some choice for patients. The closer we move to an all salaried profession with GP s as employees of a centralised NHS the less choice and innovation will be on offer.

One of the problems today is the reluctance of younger doctors to take on the responsibilities of co ownership and management of a partnership. Many opt for part time salaried employment. This makes it more difficult to provide sufficient cover and irregular hours which Home visits and emergencies can entail.

There is also an issue over early retirement. Some GP s argue that the reduction of limits on tax free pension saving stops them working more years to build a better pension pot. Many GP s are also in the pay band above £100,000 where the effective marginal tax rate is 60% , discouraging full time or longer hours working.

Government needs to listen to GP s over tax and pensions, and look at a range of ways to facilitate more GP surgeries and practices. We are short of capacity. GP surgeries can be places where a whole lot of tests, diagnoses, treatments and procedures can be successfully carried out relieving pressure on hospitals and providing a service close to home for more people.