

Paying for the NHS

I support paying for the NHS out of general taxation, with health care free at the point of need for all UK citizens. I see that there are some who now say we need to put up taxes more to meet the future bills. Some are particularly keen to increase National Insurance. I see no need to do this, and do not think it a good idea to increase taxes on work. I thought all political parties thought work a good thing, with a general enthusiasm for more and better paid jobs as the answer to our economic and social prayers. Taxing work more is not the way to do this.

So how can we meet the increases in spending that we will definitely need in the NHS?

The first thing to improve is to remind everyone this is a National health Service, not a World Health Service. The government and NHS need to get better at collecting the money from patients who are not UK citizens for all non emergency treatment. Someone visiting the UK should be welcome to register with a GP and have access to our hospitals if they need it, but there should be a full charge of the costs to them or their insurance company. I and others have urged the government to do this, and it is official policy. I am not sure it is being implemented properly in each hospital and surgery.

The second is to not have a Transition period with the EU but to move to spending our money on our own priorities from March next year. The Treasury should be leading the opposition to delay in getting our money back, not urging us to give the EU more and more for longer. I don't see what we are buying for the extra £40bn the EU says it wants.

The third is to set tax rates that maximise revenue, which I have discussed here before. Our tax rates on enterprise, saving and investment are reducing the amount of revenue that could be raised by stifling transactions and new activity. The Treasury accepts the theory that above a certain rate a tax collects less, not more, but still imposes rates that are clearly above the revenue maximising level in some cases.