

# Stop the privatisation of our NHS Blood and Transplant Service

UNITE BRIEFING

**For generations, the British people have willingly given their blood to help save the lives of others.**

What started as a vital way to support troops injured during the second world war is now one of the biggest voluntary services in this country. The service is older than the NHS itself.

People give freely because they believe in helping their fellow man.

It is service for the common good and that proud ethos has never been diluted.

Until now.

Now there are serious concerns that the government is considering the introduction of the private sector into NHS Blood and Transplant service (16 February 2011).

To do so would be a huge error and would fundamentally change the relationship between the service and its donors.

People give blood as a 'gift' to their fellow human beings – not for money, or for a profit made by a company, but because it's a humanitarian act of kindness and generosity.

Many give because a member of their own family has had their life saved by the gift of blood from a stranger.

It is an act of selflessness – but we now need to stand together to defend this.

**Our blood is not for sale.**

When Health Secretary, Andrew Lansley took office last year he begun a review into the blood service in order to "commission an in-depth review of opportunities to make more [it] commercially effective".

Since then, his department has held talks with private providers about running parts of NHS Blood and Transplant service. It is understood that Capita and DHL are among those being talked to.

But where will this stop? Is the Government wanting to open the door to companies to make profit from people donating life saving blood for others?

**At the moment this is an idea being considered by the Department of Health – but unless people show they don't want this the government will press ahead with their reckless plans.**



**A public service to be proud of**

The NHS Blood and Transplant Service is a success story. Its specialist nurses collect blood from volunteer donors and then the service ensures it reaches the patients that need it. Donors help save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people every year. Cancer patients, accident victims and women giving birth who develop complications.

It also co-ordinates the 24-hour organ matching and allocation service which arranges our much needed organ transplant service.

And it is not the case that the NHSBT is 'ineffective' or 'inefficient'. Their last annual report showed the service: "met more than 99.9% of all product requests" and they have "implemented efficiencies which helped to reduce the cost of a unit of red cells from £140 to £130" – this is a fall in cost of over 7%.

The NHSBT had undertaken in increasing the number of organ donations the total number of organ transplants carried out in the period April 2009 to March 2010 was the highest ever seen.



**FACT –  
Private sector  
involvement will  
deter donations**

A recent study in New Zealand found that donors were less likely to give if profits were introduced into the service.

Even a small drop in the number of donors would have a disastrous impact on the service.

Voluntary unpaid donors account for 100% of blood supplies in 58 countries, including Britain.

Where blood is donated for free by volunteers it is an altruistic gift; Unite firmly believes that no private company should then be able to profit from this humanitarian act.

Please help keep our blood service uncontaminated by the profit motive.

Please make sure that this policy is consigned to the dustbin.

Please help reassure the millions of donors up and down the country that the service they cherish is safe.

## What donors say...

*"Giving blood is a voluntary act carried out by large numbers of generous people. Should a third party be allowed to profit from that generosity then the British public will stop donating blood. I know I would."* **Chris Mullin, Brighton**

*"I nursed for many years and the transfusion service was a mainstay for all those needing blood during that time. I also gave blood for all the years I could. That gift and millions like it, would be less likely to be forthcoming if people other than the BTS were making their living from it."* **Eve Alexander, Horsham**

*"I have been a blood donor for the last twenty five years. I also work in the NHS and see the life saving results of blood transfusions. This profiting from blood must not be allowed to happen."*

**Philomena Griffin, London**

*"I give blood because my daughter nearly died in childbirth, and was only saved by being given 8 pints of blood. I'll be forever grateful to the anonymous people who gave the blood that saved her, and want to reply by doing the same. The Big Society is about people helping each other. The profit motive is the worst incentive for helping others."* **Jennifer Evans, Aldershot**

*"As a doner of more than 20 years and having a rare blood group, this would sadden me and I would re-think giving in the future if companies make money out my free donation."* **Leslie Brower, Surrey**

## What you can do to help

**Sign the petition –**

**<http://action.unitetheunion.com/BloodMoney>**

**Tell your MP that you do not want private companies  
profiting from our Blood Service**