

# BMA: Government plans to create crisis to privatise NHS

By Henry Bodkin

DOCTORS' leaders have accused the Government of a conspiracy to create a crisis in hospitals in order to usher in the back-door privatisation of the National Health Service.

The British Medical Association yesterday passed a motion claiming that ministers were using plans set out last year, ostensibly as a means to reform over-spending facilities, as a front for selling off the health service.

They fuelled the row by also accusing political leaders of "scape-goating" doctors as a means of "distracting the public from an under-funded service".

However, the Department of Health said the union's claims "had no relationship with reality", arguing that more public money was being spent on the NHS than at any point in its history.

Dr Chaand Nagpual, who takes over as BMA chairman this week, said: "As doctors, we strive to provide safe, quality care to our patients. Yet we

appear set up to fail. We trail European nations, with significantly fewer doctors and hospital beds per head and spend £10 billion less per year on our health service."

Following an overspend in the hospital sector of at least £2.45 billion in 2015-16, NHS England initiated a series of Sustainability and Transformation Plans, which divided the country into 44 areas and charged healthcare providers to come up with more efficient processes.

But yesterday these were branded "Slash, Trash and Privatise plans" by BMA members, who passed the motion overwhelmingly.

A Department of Health spokesman said: "This motion sadly has no relationship with reality - while of course there are pressures on the front line, the Government is now spending more than any in history on the NHS, has left doctors themselves to decide on use of the private sector, and public satisfaction is now the highest it has been in all but three of the last 20 years."

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