

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE NHS?

NHS CRISIS

- The British Red Cross [announced](#) in January 2017 that the NHS is facing a “humanitarian crisis” this winter. This is because hospitals and ambulance services are struggling to keep up with patient demand. A third of hospital trusts have [issued warnings](#) to say that they cannot cope with demand and some struggling hospitals have been forced to [cancel cancer operations](#).

WHO IS TO BLAME?

- One key reason why the NHS is facing this crisis is because of underfunding from the Conservative government. According to [Aditya Chakraborty](#), “the NHS is enduring the sharpest and most prolonged spending squeeze in its history”. This is because overall spending on the NHS is not increasing fast enough to meet demand. Spending [needs to increase](#) by 3-4% annually – but Tory austerity means that the increase is much lower than this.
- Johnathan Ashworth, Labour’s Shadow Health Secretary, [said](#): “It’s time Theresa May urgently faced up to her responsibilities and abandoned her policy of systematically underfunding our NHS.”
- More generally, recent Conservative policies, such as the Health and Social Care Act 2012, have allowed for increased privatisation of the NHS. “Market forces and privatisation”, as Dr Youssef El-Gingihy [states](#), “are siphoning tens of billions out of the NHS budget as corporate profits”. This money is not reinvested in the health service and, consequently, the ability of the NHS to deal with increased patient demand is hit.

WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT BLAMING MIGRANTS FOR THE CRISIS?

- The Tories have announced a number of plans in recent months that are designed to tackle so-called “health tourism”. These plans include making migrant patients [pay for care](#) before they receive treatment and forcing all patients to [show passports](#) to access NHS care.
- Labour’s Johnathan Ashworth castigated the passports proposal, [saying](#): “For those eligible the principle of the NHS free at the point of use must never be compromised.” There are concerns that such proposals will deter vulnerable people from accessing treatment.
- Some also see these Tory announcements as a means to distract people from the real causes of the crisis in the NHS. For example, “health tourism” is responsible for only 0.3% of NHS spending. Dr Rachel Clarke [compares](#) Theresa May to Donald Trump in this regard: “Whipping up anti-immigrant feeling to divert attention from the crisis state of our NHS is like accusing “bad hombres” and Muslims of ruining America – this is cynical, sinister stuff.”