



**The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP**  
**Secretary of State for Health and Social Care**

via email

15<sup>th</sup> December 2025

Dear Minister

**Aubrey Report into Governance within the Breast Surgery Services (County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust)**

We consider that this report, demonstrating harm to NHS patients and waste of scarce public resources, provides good reasons to review the use of the private sector.

There are failures of governance, as listed below:

1. Contracts were "reimbursed on a per-patient basis, which incentivised throughput without enough clinical scrutiny."
2. "high operative rate for benign cases" including "unnecessary mastectomies and axillary clearance, and benign procedures that were not clinically indicated." This equates to NHS funds wasted, and future costs include the many complaints which will ensue.
3. Conflict of interest - the lead breast surgeon in control of NHS and private sector clinical services.
4. Concerns ignored over years because of a failure of the local Freedom to Speak Up system which must be replaced.
5. "Staff consistently reported that the Trust's culture was predominantly performance-driven, with an emphasis on capacity, performance targets and financial targets".
6. Duty of Candour delayed.
7. A failure to invest in tools crucial to improving breast cancer diagnosis and treatment.

We consider that investment in NHS services would give better results and that better governance is arranged if more contracts with the private sector are planned.

Yours sincerely,

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