

Your Ref: RK/LL/Cons/Rose

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30 APR 2007

Thank you for your letter of 26 January to Caroline Flint enclosing correspondence from your constituent Mr Les Rose of 11 Montague Road, West Harnham, Salisbury SP2 8NJ about the regulation of fraudulent healers. I apologise for the delay in replying.

While I appreciate Mr Rose's concerns, it would not be possible to introduce regulation for every possible situation. The Government is often accused of introducing too much regulation so we have to be careful before rushing to regulate.

The purpose of regulation is to protect the public, to ensure that those who practise a health profession are doing so safely. There are currently eight regulatory bodies. In total, they have around 1.1million health professionals on their registers. The regulatory bodies have four main functions:

- to establish standards of competence, ethics and conduct;
- to set standards for training;
- to maintain a register of those who meet the standards; and
- to deal with registrants who fall short of the required standards, sometimes by placing conditions on their registration or erasing them from the register.

We are currently working towards extending the scope of statutory regulation by introducing regulation of herbal medicine, acupuncture practitioners and Chinese Medicine.

However, there are currently no plans to extend statutory regulation to other professions, such as psychic surgery. We expect these professions to develop their own unified systems of voluntary self-regulation. If they then wish to pursue statutory regulation, they will need to demonstrate that there are risks to patients and the public that voluntary regulation cannot address.

I hope this clarifies the current position.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of two lines. The top line is a long, sweeping horizontal stroke with a slight upward curve at the end. The bottom line is a more complex, cursive signature that starts with a large 'P' and ends with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

PHILIP HUNT