

## Starmer is talking totally irresponsible nonsense about...

/www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2023/01/15/starmer-is-talking-total-irresponsible-nonsense-about-th

Published: January 12, 2026, 8:03 pm

I am trying, very hard, to keep calm this morning having read the following article on the front of the Sunday Telegraph:

# Starmer: I will slash 'nonsense' bureaucracy in the NHS

By Camilla Turner  
CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

SIR KEIR STARMER has vowed to slash "mind-boggling" NHS bureaucracy as he said the service must either "reform or die".

The Labour leader cautioned that "well-meaning reverence" for the health service has "supplanted reality", adding that it must not be seen as "off-limits" for criticism.

He outlined a series of reforms that a Labour government would bring in, which include allowing patients to bypass GPs to make self-referrals to specialists as well as gradually turning family doctors into direct NHS employees.

It is the first time Sir Keir has publicly backed the proposals, previously mooted by Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary.

Writing in *The Sunday Telegraph*, Sir Keir said the situation for NHS patients is now "intolerable and dangerous", adding: "The idea the service is still 'the envy of the world' is plainly wrong."

His remarks - which will be seen as a break from Labour's traditional veneration of the NHS - come as nurses prepare for a fresh round of strikes on Wednesday and Thursday of this week.

Sir Keir also outlined Labour's plans to crack down on the "bureaucratic nonsense" that patients encounter every day in the health service.

"Why can't people with persistent back problems self-refer to physio?" he said. "Why, if you notice bleeding, do you have to get a GP appointment, simply to get the tests that you then do yourself at home?"

"Every patient will have their own experience of these mundane inconveniences and inefficiencies. Across the system and across the country each one adds up, resulting in a mind-boggling waste of time, energy and money, all of which could be better spent."

The NHS is facing one of its worst winter crises with medics warning about hospitals running out of oxygen and the number of patients being treated in corridors and ambulances.

Heart-attack victims were left waiting an average of 90 minutes for an ambulance last month - the worst waiting times on record.

Sir Keir warned that "investment alone won't be enough" to rescue the NHS and said he will tackle "the wrong thinking" among hospital managers to force through change and modernisa-

tion of the service. His message is a direct challenge to Rishi Sunak, who has made cutting down NHS waiting-list times one of his key priorities as Prime Minister.

Last night, Downing Street announced plans for a major expansion of his "virtual wards" initiative, whereby patients are treated at home as part of efforts to free up hospital beds.

Sir Keir said Mr Sunak's promise to get waiting lists down is merely the "path of least resistance" and the "stale route to further decline" of the health service.

He described how the model of using doctors as the only "front door" of the NHS is no longer viable as younger doctors are increasingly put off from taking on the "burdens and liabilities" of running GP practices.

Currently, GPs are self-employed and run their own practices under contracts awarded by the NHS. Sir Keir wants to gradually wind this down and make GPs direct employees of the NHS.

"It's time for us to think about a new, sustainable system, one that allows GPs to focus on caring for patients rather than the admin that comes with effectively running a small business," he said.

"This would be a big change and it won't happen overnight. But I am a pragmatist, focused on what works for patients. As GPs retire and those contracts are handed back, I want to phase in a new system that sees GPs fairly rewarded within the NHS, working much more closely with other parts of the system."

Sir Keir Starmer: Page 19



It is very apparent that Labour is intent on pursuing its anti-doctor, anti-NHS, agenda.

It is also very apparent that Labour is intent on putting itself in the place that David Cameron was in after 2010, as the party of austerity intent on appealing to the middle-class, Torygraph reading voter who hates the state and all it can do for us, as leading Labour politicians so now very obviously do as well. Why else promote ideas behind that far-right newspaper's paywall?

And what is also clear is that Starmer is as utterly incompetent as Wes Streeting when it comes to this issue. I have already discussed this article with a doctor this morning (it helps to be married to one) but I will quote other doctors who share her view, including Rachel Clarke:



So why would Starmer do this? Because the private medical sector hates GPs, of course, because they are so bad for its business model. That is precisely because one of the most basic tasks of a GP is to protect people from unnecessary medical interventions at best (i.e. if they are actually well), and to direct them to the ones that are really needed, so eliminating unnecessary duplication if things are at their worst (i.e. when there may be something wrong).

But, along with Rachel Clarke, I agree the NHS needs reform. Most of all, people need to avoid it. Right now GP appointments are running at double the number that they were only a couple of decades ago. So let's start with the reform that is really required - which is the one needed to keep people away from doctors in the first place As Dr Philip

Hammond has said on this:



He could have added air quality too. That is the most pressing need when so many people are now in hospital because of respiratory diseases that are avoidable with masks and measures to improve air quality which could have a massive impact on health, just as improving water quality did in the 19th century. But Labour won't talk about that: it is far too right-wing libertarian to discuss issues such as public health. Only meeting consumer demand concerns it. And, of course, it is refusing to open its chequebook.

Nor will it talk about the bureaucracy that really needs to be removed from the NHS. That would involve eliminating every hospital and ambulance trust and all the commissioning groups, each with their own massively expensive and duplicated systems, standards, rules and accounting and reporting requirements as well as quite unnecessarily expensive management. Simply replace the lot with accountable regional integrated health authorities covering all health and social care in significant geographic areas. That's where the reform of the NHS is required. But of course, that would make it harder for the private sector to get their hands on the service, so Starmer and Streeter aren't going there.

I have spent thirteen years now opposing neoliberal Tories who have moved ever further right, and are now neo-fascist, as Suella Braverman makes clear by her comments, time and again.

But now I have to face the prospect of a Labour government that is both utterly incompetent, as Starmer's comments noted above prove, but also wilfully negligent in its responsibility to its members and the people of this country in abandoning anything even close to a left-of-centre principle.

How much lower can politics in this country go?