

Banning smoking outside pubs is not going to solve the ...

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There is a problem in the NHS. There are too many sick people in the UK. The number of times people see a GP a year is, for example, increasing, and the number of frequent attenders seeing a GP often [is rising dramatically](#). Either people really are sick, or they think they are, and that comes down to much the same thing at the end of the day: demand for the NHS is rising inexorably.

In that case, the obvious need is to improve people's health. That's not just to save cost in the NHS. It is also to improve people's well-being. There is little that Labour could do that would be more effective.

And so, its big idea is to ban smoking outside pubs.

I despair. Fewer than 10% of people in the UK now smoke. Many of them will not do so outside pubs. And the risk of getting cancer as a result of them doing so is very small, even if anyone could identify a figure at all. I am assured that the causes of cancer are not that identifiable.

So why is Labour doing this? Because it looks like it is going to something, however meaningless it might be.

And it is ignoring the fact that this might do harm. Pubs are places of social contact for many. Take that away for smokers, and their rate of other illnesses may well rise.

This, then, is performative at best and harmful at worst.

So, what should Labour do? If it wants to tackle obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression and more, it has to tackle the excess consumption of fructose in our society. [It is as simple as that](#). Take on big sugar (and the big pharma companies that thrive on treating the conditions the big sugar companies create) and we have a plan for cutting NHS costs and [making people better](#) in vast numbers of ways.

So, the question is, why won't Labour do that? It could. It could require a reduction in sugar in food. It could reduce the amount in fast food. It could change packaging, as

happened with tobacco, and which worked. And it could make the country vastly better.

If it won't, Labour is not seriously trying to solve health issues, or the problems in the NHS. Only tackling sugar can now do both those things. And I expect nothing to happen.