

Funding the Future

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As the Guardian has reported in a newsletter this morning:

Wes Streeting has decided it's time to bring [a] competitive edge to the NHS. Yesterday, the health secretary delivered a “bullish” and contentious speech confirming the government will publish a league table ranking hospitals in England, after a “no-holds-barred, sweeping review” of NHS performance. Those at the top will be rewarded with more funding and autonomy, while those at the bottom can expect “turnaround teams” and sackings.

Streeting's statements follow an independent [review](#) of the NHS that found hospital productivity has sharply declined in the past five years.

Let's ignore the fact that 'productivity' in the NHS is an almost meaningless measure that is heavily distorted by the prosperity of the area being served because the wealthy are healthier, are more disciplined with regard to healthcare, and even tend to turn up to appointments more often (because, for example, they have their own means of transport and are not dependent on buses that do not run) than those in lower-income areas. Streeting should know that but clearly does not realise that if there's a decline in NHS productivity, this is a major cause of it.

Instead, let's look at the stupidity of Streeting's proposal, which produced wholly negative outcomes when Alan Milburn last introduced it as Labour health secretary about twenty years ago and is now being introduced again because Milburn is now back at the Department of Health as a non-executive director and advisor, and has nothing more to contribute now than the crass ideas he rolled out and failed with last time he was near the place.

What will this league table measure:

- * The relative poverty of areas served
- * Tory bias over the last 14 years in better-funding Tory voting areas
- * The difficulty of meeting needs in areas left devastated by Tory austerity
- * The consequence of that austerity on the lives of millions

So what does Streeting want to do with his 'league table'? He wants to reward prosperity and punish those seeking to do what Nye Bevan always wanted - which was

to deliver healthcare to everyone, whoever they were and whatever their means might be, even though healthcare for those with the least is often the most expensive care to provide.

Rightly, NHS staff are furious.

Rightly, they know this will unfairly punish them.

Rightly, they know that this will increase health inequality - and so other forms of inequality - in the UK.

And rightly, they did not expect this from a Labour health secretary.

But then, Wes Streeting is LINO (Labour in name only) and about as much a socialist as David Cameron ever was.

It appears that lacking imagination, not caring, and being utterly indifferent to the harm you might cause by your actions are the qualifications for serving in Starmer's cabinet. Streeting stupifies those who do.