

## Can Wes Streeting think?

Published: January 13, 2026, 12:32 am

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Wes Streeting has made clear that no action on social care will be taken during this parliament by setting up a commission to report on the issue by 2028, when it will be too late to do anything about it. Is that because he just hasn't got the ability to think about issues this big?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBEqa6H6Nis?si=ynnTMNhFMotgza9m>

This is the audio version:

[https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=bdux-179684b-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&font=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo\\_link=episode\\_page&btn-skin=c73a3a](https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=bdux-179684b-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&font=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a)

This is the transcript:

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Can Wes Streeting think? I'm not at all sure that the evidence stacks up to suggest that he can. Let me explain.

After 14 years in opposition and six months in government, WestStreeting, as the Health Secretary, has now announced that Labour is going to tackle the problem of social care in the UK, which was known to be a problem when Labour last left office in 2010.

Successive Tory governments looked at this issue and ran commissions. And the latest

of those commissions, which was chaired by Andrew Dilnot, came out with a series of recommendations on how to tackle social care, which many people thought were reasonable, including a cap on total contributions that people would have to make to provide for their own care and old age. And Labour has rejected its findings on the basis that there is no money.

So, the one thing we know about the new commission that Wes Streeting is going to set up is that he's going to provide it with no money because he's already set that as part of its terms of reference, by implication, if not explicitly.

And, what we also know is that this commission is going to sit for three years. It's actually going to report sometime in 2028, and Labour has to have a general election by July 2029. In other words, whatever this commission recommends will not happen because there won't be time to legislate on its findings before the next general election takes place and already most of us are betting on Labour going out of office in 2029.

So, what do we have to say about Wes Streeting as a consequence?

First of all, that he's incompetent. With all that time that was available to him in opposition, he could have done the thinking that is required on social care himself. After all, what else did he have to do? Yes, he was a constituency MP, and I know that takes time, but his fundamental job was to be the opposition health secretary. And his next most important job was to prepare Labour for government, because it was fairly obvious some years ago that this was going to happen. But he didn't. He did nothing. He didn't prepare a thing. And the conclusion we have to come to as a consequence is that actually Wes Streeting can't think.

And the evidence that supports that is that he's had to appoint someone else now to do his thinking for him. And what is more, he's appointed them for three years because he thinks it's very difficult.

Let's go back in history for a moment, shall we, and just compare Wes Streeting and his inability to prepare and think to the masters of the past.

Let's think about Lord Keynes, the man who thought up the economics which underpinned the post-war consensus and the creation of prosperity for more people than had ever happened before after the Second World War. Did he do his thinking whilst chairing a commission? No. He sat down in a room at Cambridge University and did it there.

Let's think about Beveridge, who wrote the report that underpinned the social safety net - social security, state pension improvement, and so on - that again contributed to that post-war safety net. Did he require a long commission whilst Labour was in government in 1945 and after? No. He actually wrote his report pretty much single-handed during the course of the Second World War in anticipation of

government.

Let's think about Clement Attlee, the man who created that post-war Labour government. Did he get into office and then say, "What are we going to do?" No, he knew what he was going to do.

And then there was Nye Bevan. The man who is credited with creating the NHS. Did he arrive without an idea of how to do that? No, he knew what his job was going to be. It took him three years to deliver, I accept that, but he had the most enormous uphill struggle in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War to create the NHS, but he delivered it. in just three years, nonetheless.

And let's think about figures since then, people who could also think. People who came to mind immediately are people like Denis Healey, the Labour Chancellor in the 1970s, a man with a very big brain.

And he wasn't alone. Like it or not, Margaret Thatcher had a brain and thought, I don't like what thinking she did, but undoubtedly, she was a thinker.

And she wasn't alone in that regard either, in the Tories, Michael Heseltine could certainly think about what he wanted to achieve and did so before ever getting into government in 1979, and again later on.

These were people who could not only be politicians but who could plan, who could think, and who could act. We lack people like that now.

And Wes Streeting is nothing like that at all. He can't plan. We know he didn't plan in 14 years.

He can't think. We know that because he's outsourced this commission to a person called Louise Casey to do the work for him.

And he can't act because by the time he gets her report, there won't be time to do so.

He really is the definition of the modern incompetent politician. I look back to those politicians who I recall, and there were, by the way, plenty of others who I haven't named, and think, really? Where did they come from? And where did they go? And why is it that people like that aren't attracted to politics any more?

Is it because we now live in a media age?

Is it because 24-hour news has made people so reactive that they have no time to think anymore?

Or is it simply because we've made being in Parliament so unattractive to people of ability that they don't want to go there?

I don't know, but we have to solve this. And we can only do that if we transform the basis of our politics, which does require proportional representation, which does require proper accountability of elected politicians, which does require a real relationship between people and those they elect, and which does require people to actually fight over ideas, which, of course, is the one thing that neoliberal politics has guaranteed that we don't have.

We need those changes because we can't suffer people like Wes Streeting for a lot longer.