

When the state goes wrong it can go horribly wrong

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I was planning to comment on the arrest of three NHS managers on charges of manslaughter in connection with the supposed murder of children by Lucy Letby today, but then [I noticed what Roy Lilley had](#) to say on the issue, and thought it both pithy and wholly appropriate:

The Lucy Letby drama took a new twist yesterday. Three of the bosses at her former hospital were arrested on suspicion of gross-negligence, manslaughter.

Arresting managers is a highly unusual step.

I think most fair minded people would say Letby's convictions, based on what we now know are at best, unsafe and deserve another look.

If Lucy Letby didn't kill those babies, then what exactly are we accusing the managers of failing to stop?

Arresting people for not preventing a crime that may not have happened isn't justice, it's theatre.

The evidence against Lucy Letby now looks to be utterly threadbare, at best. Many medics from across the world say it lacks any credibility.

The baby unit at the hospital at which she worked failed because it was treating neonatal babies that it was underqualified to care for, did not have the expertise to manage, and was ill-equipped to manage. When the ages of babies that it was allowed to treat was increased, their death rate returned to normal.

But, to maintain the farce that there was not a systems failure in the NHS, due to cuts, politicians are maintaining the line that Lucy Letby killed babies, and is now accusing managers of letting her do so.

As Roy Lilley says, this is not about justice, it is about theatre. But there are dangerous side effects.

Who will want to be a neonatologist in the environment we now have in the UK?

Who will want to be a neonatal nurse?

Who will want to be a hospital manager?

All now face the risk of such extreme scrutiny that an already hard and extremely demanding job will become totally unattractive when there are better options available.

And who will look after premature babies in that case? It will not be the private sector. They will not have the skills when everyone in this sector is trained in the NHS. Nor will they want to take the risk. So, presumably, these babies will die.

And that will be because over-zealous politicians and incompetent police, aided and abetted as ever by lawyers who have not the slightest comprehension of statistics, coupled with the deeply flawed expert witness system of evidence used in this trial, means that an almost certainly innocent woman is in jail and others look as though they might be headed that way. And apparently, there is nothing in our legal system that will even prevent this miscarriage of justice from going on. An Act of Parliament might be required to free her.

I think the state works well most of the time. When it goes wrong, it goes horribly wrong. This is a case where it has done just that.