

Do we need Keir Starmer, or do we need doctors? That is...

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Keir Starmer condemned the doctors and their strike as irresponsible when taking questions in the House of Commons yesterday. In doing so, he tried to represent them as the people who are destroying healthcare in the UK.

That is a complete misrepresentation of the truth.

He also tried to portray them as people who do not care, and again, nothing could be further from the truth.

The fact is that UK doctors want three things.

First, they want a level of pay that gives them a chance of buying somewhere to live near where they work. I do not think that is an unreasonable objective for people who have dedicated years of their lives to training for a job that the state said it wanted them to undertake.

Second, they want some security in their employment when, at present, the government is playing exceedingly silly games with junior doctors who discover, after years of training, that they are then denied further opportunities to work because they have failed to meet artificial targets imposed by people who do not understand the real nature of the job that doctors undertake.

Third, they want an NHS that does not treat people in corridors, or make them wait years for care, or process them as if they are cogs in a machine rather than people who need understanding, sympathy, care, and appropriate treatment.

The villain in all of these things is the government. It will not provide the funding required to deliver the care people need, delivered by people who can afford to do the antisocial jobs asked of them.

So, the villain with regard to doctor unemployment, when doctors have relatively limited transferable skills into the rest of the economy, is the government, which claims it wants to improve the NHS but is discarding doctors as fast as it can at present. The

reason is, of course, austerity economics.

And the villain with regard to corridor care, long waiting lists, and so much else is the government, which has refused to provide adequate healthcare facilities in the UK for decades. This began with Labour's bizarre use of PFI to outsource hospital building, which delivered massive gains to the private sector but reduced NHS capacity enormously, and it continues now because governments simply will not provide safe facilities in many hospitals in which people have any chance of being treated with even basic respect while they are ill.

None of this is the doctors' fault.

Every single element of it is the consequence of economic policies to which both Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves now subscribe, with the inevitable failure of a public service being the result.

The people who do not care are the politicians who voted for this, the Treasury that imposed it, the financiers who demanded it, and the economists who claimed that we cannot afford to care. Unfortunately, Keir Starmer has decided to remain on the side of financiers, neoliberal economists, the Treasury, and orthodox political views that will continue to make people suffer wholly unnecessarily in the UK, which is precisely the point that doctors are making.

Keir Starmer can try to pretend that he cares, but the truth is apparent. He is the person delivering failure, not our doctors. And there is one decision the British public needs to make: who do we need most in the future? Do we need Keir Starmer, or do we need doctors? I think the answer is obvious, and that is why the doctors have to win this dispute.

Taking further action

If you want to write a letter to your MP on the issues raised in this blog post, there is a ChatGPT prompt to assist you in doing so, with full instructions, [here](#).

One word of warning, though: please ensure you have the correct MP. ChatGPT can get it wrong.

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