

# NHS management

The NHS Chief Executive for England says as a commentator might that she would like the government to settle the nurses and doctors pay dispute. Many of us would like to see that happen, as it will take a happier workforce to deliver the targets to get waiting lists down, treatments and operations up. A backbench MP can say that, a member of the public can urge that, a journalist can write articles about it. I find it most odd that the CEO says it. She after all hires and fires staff members, settles pay and job gradings, supervises promotions and training, and directs staff to the places where they can do most good to deliver the services the NHS needs to look after the public well.

To suggest that there is a simple row between medics and Ministers over how large a percentage increase in pay there should be leaves open the question of what is the CEO's view of how much such a rise should be? Surely she and her advisers know what the jobs market tells them about pay levels, and her daily contact with medics should give her insight into what they want by way of pay and conditions to end their strikes. She also knows what increase she has agreed for her budget this year and must have a view on what is affordable. Management is usually about making difficult decisions about how many people to hire, how much to pay them, how to deploy them and how to energise them to raise productivity. With over 400 senior managers on six figure salaries there are people who can help her with these decisions.

If the CEO is working well with Ministers then you would expect her to be influential over helping set a pay offer. This advice would be given privately and she would either win the argument or accept the Ministers judgement having put her case. This would then be a united NHS management offer, bringing together both politicians and senior managers. More importantly many of the demands of the medics in the public version of the pay negotiations we have all heard are about non pay issues. They want better work rotas, more support from other staff, better conditions and the right supplies and equipment. These are all issues that fall to the managers more than the Ministers to resolve, working within budgets and signing contracts with external suppliers.

Ministers rightly have to take the overall responsibility for what happens and what is achieved. They need to work with senior managers closely. I hope the managers will find a way to influence and then support Ministerial policy, which tends rightly to concentrate on overall aims and targets. Real and cash health spending have shot up since 2019. The issue is what are patients getting for it, as well as why cannot all that money buy more contentment with jobs and remuneration packages? £233 bn for public sector UK health is a lot of money which needs to buy more happiness.