

The Chancellor's wish to see greater productivity in public services

The Chancellor gave an important lecture recently on the need to raise public sector productivity. He drew attention to the decline in public service productivity by 5.7% compared to pre pandemic, whilst private services had shown a productivity improvement of 1.7% over the same time period.

He raised the issue of the "10,000 public workers in equality, diversity and inclusion" wondering if this was too many. I would add why did the NHS recruit more than 3,500 additional managers over the last three years? How did their appointment coincide with a major decline in productivity and what are they doing about it? How many new forms and requirements have these additional managers imposed on the front line staff? Why do we have duplicate or triplicate management, with management at NHS England levels, management at regional NHS quango level and management at hospital or GP Trust level? Why is there a cadre of senior NHS managers in the Department of Health and another corps of senior managers in NHS England? How many requirements on NHS trusts do these bodies send out each year?

When staff morale is low as it has been in the NHS with strikes and disputes over working conditions as well as about pay it implies the senior management have not listened and led in the way they should. It took senior management a very long time to come up with a manpower plan. Given the dominance of the NHS in the UK health area it is important the NHS does enough to stimulate sufficient education and training of our future health practitioners. That will take time and is not enough by way of response to current troubles. The senior management need to rework rotas, shifts, working practices and conditions with their medical teams to win back the loyalty and support of the staff. There is the danger of losing too many experienced and good people over conditions and job gradings.