

Working smarter and better

Most people think boosting productivity is a good thing. If you increase the amount of goods or service each individual worker can produce you have a more efficient economy and pay can rise to reflect the boost to output.

Now that the NHS is taking such a large amount of the national budget and a substantial share of total public spending, the issue of working smarter and better in the NHS has returned to prominence. According to the ONS NHS health productivity fell by 0.8%, the last year (2019) before the pandemic disrupted it. In the period 1996 to 2019 NHS productivity advanced by 0.7% per annum, or a bit faster if you make a quality adjustment to the figures. This is a disappointing result given the ability to use digital technology to boost output through more remote consultations and the growing efficacy of some less invasive treatments.

Quality and efficiency are two sides of the same coin. Get things right first time and there will be no remedial pains and costs. Eliminate hospital carried infections and cut the workload. Recruit and train more nurses and doctors who share the aims of each Trust and wish to be regular employees, cutting back on the need for agency staff. Encourage specialisms so skilled teams become excellent at elective treatments through regular experience from specialisation. Fashion protocols for additional less invasive treatments. Adopt more medicines with good test results for treating conditions. Cut waste levels in the use of drugs, surgical and nursing products and medical equipment.

We are still waiting for the plans to spend the extra money for the waiting list reduction and the manpower plans. Why don't we get extra hospital beds capacity for all the extra money? The Health Secretary needs to challenge the NHS CEO more.