

The NHS blame culture? Look to our neoliberal reforms

Jeremy Hunt's article *Here's the effect of our NHS blame culture: babies die* (Guardian, 9.10.25) will be welcome to many, especially those healthcare professionals who have had to endure the intimidating mistrust and adversarial working culture he describes. We have been voicing this for many years.

What is missing from his account is the seminal role of government's NHS reforms in creating these problems. In particular, the creation, then proliferation, of commercialised and competing autarkic NHS Trusts and outside providers over many years. This has generated a growing culture of corporate defensiveness and reputation-anxiety. Within such conditions practitioners then adapt to behave much like employees in large commercial organisations – they must show compliance, 'loyalty', conformity and seamless performance, albeit speciously.

This tendency has increased with every reform over the last forty years; each has carried forward a neoliberal agenda – both Labour and Conservative governments have devised policies and managements to assure this. The currently vaunted Ten-Year Plan – largely mentored by the Blair-era's neoliberalising Health Secretary Alan Milburn – will merely entrench the problems Jeremy Hunt has otherwise so adroitly observed and understood.

His is a glaring omission.

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