

# NHS recruits being driven away before they've even started – Jonathan Ashworth

**Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary**, responding to official UCAS figures published today which show that applications for undergraduate nursing degrees starting in September 2017 are down 23 percent compared with the previous year, said:

"The Government have been warned repeatedly that cutting bursaries and funding for student nurses would cut off the future supply of NHS staff. Now we have the proof that those warnings were right – 23 percent fewer people have applied to study nursing this year.

"Misguided reductions in training places under the Tory Government, combined with a never-ending pay squeeze, have left the NHS dangerously short of staff. Patients are seeing wards closed, operations cancelled and treatments delayed. Now the new recruits which the health service so desperately needs are being driven away before they've even started.

"The staff are the lifeblood of our NHS. They give their all to keep the system going in the face of underfunding and mismanagement by the Tories. The Government ought to get a grip, show our nursing students that their time and commitment is really valued, and give them the support they need when they're setting out on their careers."

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## The quiet rise of the pound

When the pound was declining a bit more after the Brexit vote we got daily commentaries from the media on this and how they thought it was caused by the decision of UK voters. Most of the devaluation of the pound actually occurred between July 2016 and April 2016, long before the media thought we would leave the EU. There was a further leg down after June 23rd. Over the last month the pound has been rising against the dollar and the Euro. We

rarely get news of this, and the rise is not attributed to the moves recently taken to press on with Brexit.

If someone believes Brexit was the crucial variable when it was falling, why do they change their view when it is rising? Why didn't the pound fall this month, given the clear indication that the government does now intend to send the Article 50 letter and has Parliamentary support to do so?

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## City Road Allotments – fencing improvement

I recently welcomed the council's commitment to a proposed improvement to the security fencing at the City Road allotments.

I am pleased to note that the work to upgrade the security fencing is now well-underway – see below :



## Wenzhou buildings collapse, many buried

An unknown number of people were buried in the debris after three residential buildings collapsed Thursday morning in Wenzhou, a rich industrial city in east China's Zhejiang Province.

The buildings were about five stories tall and were inhabited with people, sources with the local government said.

The accidents happened at around 8 a.m. in Baizhangji township of Wencheng county.

Rescue work is going on.

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## Why is the EU isolated?

Mr Tusk's cry of desperation portrays an EU surrounded by hostile forces, and in danger of subversion from within. He sees Russia as an enemy of the EU. He condemns Islamic terrorism and is clearly worried about several states to the south across the Mediterranean. He dislikes the policy of the new President of the USA. He makes no secret of his worries about China. In other words, he sees the EU as a lonely group of states in a largely hostile world, where the world's three largest military powers are not in sympathy with the EU or are hostile to it.

What is his remedy? He wants the EU to arm itself and undertake more common defence, with increased defence spending. There is no mention of NATO, Europe's principal security guarantor. He wants to accelerate European union, to create a more cohesive force in the world with a united foreign policy.

He should ask himself how has the EU got itself into such an impasse with the world's great powers?

The EU has helped create the rift with Russia. The EU claims cause against Russia for Russia's illegal military intervention in Crimea. Russia points out the EU helped destabilise the elected President of Ukraine who was just about keeping Ukraine together, to back a new President with a pro EU agenda that the Russian speakers in the country did not support. At the very least we in the west must concede that the EU helped create the conditions for an opportunistic move into Crimea by Russia. Since then the EU has wished to keep up a tough rhetoric against Russia, and has imposed sanctions. I am no supporter of Russian aggression, but I do want the EU to recognise the need to live alongside Russia and to be careful about the interventions it makes

in territories where Russia has influence. Working with Russia in the Middle East is now important given the position Russia has militarily and diplomatically in the region, as successive US Presidents have recognised.

The EU also needs to understand that the surest defence the EU has is from NATO, with the explicit military guarantee for all members.

The EU now seems to want to assert itself against China, though the cause and reason is less clear than with Russia. The EU regularly condemns Islamic terrorism, but is challenged when it comes to defining which rebels and forces on the ground in the complex Middle Eastern civil and religious wars qualify as terrorists and which can be defeated by EU action. In recent days the EU has been keen to indulge in a war of words against the new Trump Presidency, without listening to the concerns of the new Administration in Washington about trade, currencies and migration.

The overriding pessimism of Mr Tusk is sad to read. The lack of any positive forward looking agenda to engage with our ally the USA, or with the powers of China, Russia and the Middle East goes a long way to explaining the EU's loneliness. If all you offer is fear mixed with the odd threat it is not surprising the EU lacks friends. It was that combination which helped lose the EU one of its major financial contributors, the UK.