

Blame the Minister, but sort out the system

It is a crucial part of our Parliamentary democracy that we do ultimately hold government Ministers to blame for the many failings of public services and public bodies. We also expect government to intervene or to change the law when the private sector and or too many individuals miscarry.

I still believe in that system. I fully understand why government gets the blame when inflation goes too high, but note that an independent Bank of England is responsible for inflation and brought high inflation on. There are so many areas now where government is blamed but in practice the decisions and budgets rest with independent bodies, or where national and international law and judges prevent Ministers carrying out what they want to do. There are even cases where Ministers change the law but are still thwarted by activist courts.

I will explore how far this removal of power has gone, how many of the independent bodies are behaving badly or incompetently, and how courts and treaties prevent Ministers implementing the public will. As many blame Ministers, Ministers need to take back powers to solve the problems the current system fails to resolve or make worse. The doctrine of independent bodies is doing plenty of damage, from the Post Office to the railways, from Ofwat to the Bank of England. The EHCR stops us controlling our borders and the WHO which had a bad covid pandemic wants more powers to control the NHS.