

## NHS output stays low

I have been asking about the big decline in non CV 19 work in the NHS this year. Like most people I am grateful for the tireless work the CV 19 teams put in to nurse and treat those with CV 19 during the peak period of the pandemic in the spring and subsequently. Some medical and research staff have also made important advances in understanding this nasty disease which is a great contribution for all of us. Now it should be possible to use the extra capacity put in earlier this year for CV 19 and to run the rest of the NHS for the many other conditions that need treating.

The government tells me in answer to Parliamentary Questions that it has "paused " data collection and assessment of productivity this year owing to the CV 19 problems.

They state "we expect NHS productivity will have fallen considerably in 2020-21 because of increased spending on the Covid 19 response and due to reductions in elective and non elective admissions to prevent further infections in hospitals". In other words, because they persevered with mixed use hospitals with CV 19 treated alongside other conditions they removed elective non urgent surgery for a period from the hospitals altogether. They saw a reduced number of patients with other more serious and urgent conditions. Fear of infection spreading meant more social distancing and lower workloads for non CV 19.

I was also told that "for July and August,( after the end of lockdown), total completed pathways from referral to treatment were 61% of those for the same period in 2019." By August the NHS was achieving 71% of previous year levels for first outpatient appointments.

This means we are still short of significant capacity to handle non CV 19 matters. It also indicates that the decision to carry on treating CV 19 in General hospitals rather than creating isolation hospitals comes with a cost in lost activity for other conditions. In many places around the country it is possible to designate a Nightingale or one of the existing General Hospitals as a specialist isolation hospital to free the others to work normally at full capacity. We need the CV19 capacity added through Nightingales, and through acquisition of many more ventilators and intensive care equipment for CV 19 and we need to get back to previous capacity for everything else.

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## The US election

So once again the mainstream media and the polling companies get an election massively wrong. They are tone deaf to people who vote for so called populist

politicians. They despise parties that dare to stand against some of the fashionable and often wrong analyses and policies of the World bodies and elites that presume to know best. This makes it impossible for them to see the appeal of policies geared to freedom, free enterprise, self respect, and healthy scepticism of centralised power in governments and international bodies.

Doubtless they will now claim the fault was all the voters who voted the wrong way. They usually decry them and abuse them, and may say they lied to the pollsters. The fault is all their own, not that of the voters. If they are so clever and so worth their hire, they need to ask the right questions of the right people in their samples and interviews to get the forecast right. What is the point of them if they cannot?

Some of the media are quite incapable of understanding a Trump voter or a Brexit voter, because they start from the belief that it is an unacceptable conduct which only the bad, the ill informed and the stupid could countenance. Remember Hillary Clinton trying to win the Presidency by calling all who were planning to vote for Mr Trump the deplorables? I strongly disagree with the socialist way, but I respect those who vote for it and believe in it and seek to engage in political argument with them, not in trading abuse about their abilities and motives.

The polls said there would be a 10% gap between Mr Trump and Mr Biden. There is a 1.8% one. They said Mr Trump would lose a number of crucial swing states he won. The weight of media opinion was a Biden win was both inevitable and desirable. They endlessly repeated that Mr Biden would unite the USA whilst Mr Trump would divide it. They should look around them. The USA is deeply divided, and Mr Trump and Mr Biden stand for two very different ways forward for their country. It is not an easy task for anyone to unite the USA. Those who want their personal freedoms will always oppose the big government model. Those who want more government control and action to right the wrongs they see around them will never accept the demands of those who simply want their own right to lead their lives without more government demands.

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## [Vote on lock down](#)

The government won its motion to impose an English national lock down from tomorrow by 516 to 38 votes. Labour supported the government. It was mainly Conservatives voting against with some DUP MPs. Clearly there were numerous abstentions or absences on what was a most important vote. I voted against, as the government did not amend the Regulations in ways suggested to reduce the damage to jobs and social life. Most of the speakers were Conservative, with many asking for amendments to the rules, seeking better data and asking for an exit plan even where they were voting for the motion.

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## My Question during the Urgent Question on Lockdown: Economic Support, 3 November 2020

**Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** I am glad that the Government agree that where, by law, they stop people working and earning a living, they should compensate them.

Will the Government look again at the terms of the scheme for the self-employed—there are restrictions on several categories of self-employed who have no other means of earning their living and no large company support—and be more generous?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that we need all those self-employed people to be ready to return to work to get some kind of recovery going soon, because the economy is in deep trouble?

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr Steve Barclay):** I agree with my right hon. Friend that we need to ensure that the economy is able to bounce back quickly. That is why we have provided over £13 billion of support to the self-employed, which by international comparisons—I know my right hon. Friend looks at international comparisons—he will see is extremely generous.

I have set out previously in the House part of the operational difficulties, for example with owner-directors in terms of what is dividend income and what is not.

The point is that we have set out a generous self-employment income support scheme, but we need to deliver that operationally in a way that meets the tests set by, for example, the Public Accounts Committee, which has asked whether we have the right level of controls in place, given the speed at which these schemes were deployed.

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## In praise of small business and the self employed

Yesterday in Parliament the government confirmed its renewed scheme to offer some money to the self employed who are banned from working by lock down rules.

In the exchanges I welcomed the government's acceptance of a simple proposition. If government prevents someone from earning their living or from trading their business for a public health reason, they should compensate them.

I went on to ask given this common ground between us, why didn't the government follow through and make sure all categories of self employed who have lost their livelihoods to lockdown are in receipt of some substitute income for the duration of the controls?

I was not the only one to ask this. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury gave us the same answer as during the first Furlough scheme. They find it too difficult, for example, to distinguish between a self employed person working only for his own small company and paying himself a dividend, and a rich individual receiving dividends from other companies where he or she does little or no work. I find this bizarre. The Treasury should already know from tax records that the individual just has the one source of income, and works in the company he runs. They can always check it if they are suspicious. They could demand some certification by the individual when claiming the money. They rely on the individual to make an honest declaration of the dividends for tax purposes anyway.

I and others will keep pressing the government, though they seem unwilling so far to be fairer and more flexible. As I explained again to the Minister we will need all the entrepreneurs, small business people and small companies we can get when lockdown is over to power the economy back to life. Our small business sector deserves better. The Treasury should also abandon its tax attacks on people who work for themselves where the tax authorities want to claim they work one of their customers.