

Dear Editor

### **NHS complexity: political rhetoric**

In his first day in office the new Health Secretary sounded determined and bullish in his statement: *'From today the policy of this department is that the NHS is broken ... this is not good enough ... [we have] a mandate from millions of voters for reform and change of the NHS...'*

This is more theatrical than meaningful: to say something is 'broken' is a very vague assertion of fact, not a policy. It is like a motor mechanic saying a malfunctioning car is 'broken'. A policy requires a precise and accurate understanding of the malfunctioning, and then the specifics of remedies.

Even the previous government recognised that the NHS is 'not good enough': repeating this is not a policy; it is common knowledge.

There are similar problems with Streeting's 'mandate for reform and change of the NHS'. We should be very careful here: what reforms? And how? Many recent reforms have been clearly counterproductive – the Health and Social Care Act of 2012 was a radical reform that created far more problems than it alleviated.

Perhaps we need to revisit rather than reform. We need to look patiently at how and why our erstwhile service had so much better relationships between staff, between staff and patients and thus professional morale, staff recruitment and stability. Our serial reforms have largely destroyed these.

Such institutional nuances have, again and again, proved resistant to managerial reform.

We need to think and talk differently...