

## Happy Birthday, NHS

### *A letter to the Herald, June 2008*

Sir

5th July marks the 60th birthday of the National Health Service. Politicians of all parties rightly set aside their differences to join together in applauding the hard work of NHS staff past and present. All admire their commitment, often in difficult circumstances.

The NHS is a Great British institution of which people are rightly proud and protective. It binds us together nationally and it is of enormous importance locally.

This milestone anniversary is also an apt opportunity to consider how the NHS can be made better, to help its dedicated staff do what they do best.

In the last decade we have seen that too many top-down Whitehall targets distort clinical care. For example, crude targets for waiting times in A&E have led to the indignity of patients being left in 'trolley waiting areas' and ambulances.

Instead we should focus on outcomes, looking at the results of treatment – such as survival rates and patients' satisfaction. People should be given more information about the quality of NHS care.

The proposals for polyclinics are the latest example of an ill-thought-out top-down plan – and inappropriate for many areas, like ours.

Rather than constant, costly reorganisations, we should allow doctors and nurses to get on with the job they do so well: caring for people and saving lives.

Yours

Damian Hinds  
Parliamentary candidate (Conservative) – East Hants  
damian@damianhinds.info