

## **Goals and targets are rarely the best way to a better society**

David Lammy MP is rightly concerned about relative lack of senior lawyers from certain ethnic minorities. In a recent radio interview (19.12.17) he said that the only way to fix this kind of problem is for the government to command goals and targets or quotas. Desired change simply won't happen without government management, he says.

But the reasons for minority-group under-representation are humanly complicated and cannot be best undone by direct command. Such insistence on targets all too often leads to many other problems: 'positive' discrimination, gaming the system and decisions made merely to meet targets by ignoring a greater good. Such expedience has led to great waste and folly throughout our social and health services. Almost all (non-management) senior practitioners have reluctantly submitted to this.

Lammy's good intentions would, if implemented, produce similar problems in the judiciary.

Governmentally pressured goals and targets sometimes work with manufactured and procedural activities (eg vaccination programmes), but when applied to our humanly complex welfare and judiciary they can easily backfire with even greater injustice and folly.

Many of our most valuable social assets must be grown and tended carefully and slowly: they cannot be rapidly conjured by government decree.

Dr David Zigmond