

Medical neglect at Liverpool prison: what can we expect from marketised healthcare?

The media (19/12/17) report a spate of recent deaths at Liverpool prison, apparently due to medical neglect. The NHS Trust commissioned to provide care has issued a quick apology.

We have here, yet again, a tragic example of how our healthcare cannot be most safely determined by either the pressures of the market or a 'safety net' of formal inspections. Two observations indicate why.

1. The culpable NHS Trust's commissioned contract is due to end in four months. So a diplomatic apology may be all that is necessary to ease a planned exit. Where is any longer-term commitment or learning to be found in such a commercially incentivised, hiring-and-firing, rapidly rotating, system?
2. For a decade authorities have increasingly mandated an inspection regime throughout Welfare. The idea is to pre-emptively strike against future unsafe or bad practice. Yet Liverpool prison, like Mid Staffs Hospital, was able to present itself well to such formal inspection. They knew how to play the tick-box game, how to feed the beast.

Both marketisation and the inspection regime cannot do what is claimed, and then cause great damage throughout our Welfare services. They are expensively inefficient and then professionally fragmenting, depersonalising, burdensome and corrupting.

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