

The target culture rarely benefits complex human welfare

The Windrush fiasco, and the Mid-Staffs scandal six years ago, are just two examples of the human damage done by attempting to manage complex welfare by draconian government-directed targets. Many more such cases never get this kind of publicity.

Working in our Welfare services for many decades, I have witnessed how ratcheted and coercive use of targets frequently becomes 'gamed' or grotesquely complied with: corrupted data, expedient inhumanity and alienated, demoralised staff all become cultural.

So, target-driven, command-and-control Welfare has a high price. I have seen scandalous (but unreported) state-mandated distortions of professional judgement and action: stretching criteria for taking children into care, filling or removing teeth unnecessarily, 'discharging' sick patients in A&E onto trolleys in contiguous corridors, police investigating and charging trivial crimes rather than more serious and time-consuming ones ... All of these perverse follies come from State authorities believing that, by boosting certain statistics, they can bypass the complex professional judgments involved in human welfare.

Yes, such an approach may be essential to procure wartime *materiel*. But for our peacetime human processing – our Welfare? It is likely to yield us the likes of Mid-Staffs or Windrush.

The target culture then becomes bad economics, systemic unviability and rotten humanity.

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