



# News from Westminster

25<sup>th</sup> January 2007 Christine Russell MP

## Tories return to long waiting lists

On Monday, David Cameron attempted to put a new gloss on an old Tory policy. Recycling their policy to scrap NHS targets - a commitment made in the last Tory manifesto.

The Tory plan to scrap targets that have made real improvements to our health service would turn the clock back to the NHS of ten years ago.

When the Tories were last in government people waited up to 3 years for necessary operations because the Tories wouldn't invest in the NHS. Now they say they want to scrap the targets that have driven down waiting times for heart and cancer patients.

There is no point having a health improvement target if you can't get the operation you need because the waiting lists are so long.

David Cameron needs to face up to the real improvements that have taken place in the health service under Labour and the fact that patients regularly report their satisfaction with the NHS.

**It shows that despite the warm words and the PR, the Tories haven't changed.**

### NHS - Did you know?

- The Tories increased waiting lists by **400,000** between 1979 and 1997.
- Under Labour the NHS is on track to deliver a **40% reduction** in cardiovascular disease mortality by 2010, having saved almost 150,000 lives since 1996.
- Cancer mortality in people under 75 fell by nearly 16% between 1996 and 2004, **saving** an estimated **50,000 lives**.

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## Putting children's fitness at the heart of the curriculum



**Children at schools in deprived areas are to be given pedometers as part of a project to motivate inactive children to become fitter.**

The National School Pedometer Programme, launched on Wednesday, will involve 250 schools in deprived areas across the country being given 45,000 pedometers to encourage children to become more active.

Kids will also be able to track their progress on a dedicated website.

Pedometers help to show that you don't need to join a gym or start running marathons to get fitter. Simple things like going out for a walk, or taking the stairs instead of a lift can all help kids get healthier.

A pilot scheme showed an overall increase in physical activity levels - particularly in those less inclined to exercise.

Children's "step count" increased steadily from an average of 8355 steps at baseline to an average of 13939 at the end of the 23 week programme.

Excuse the pun, but I think this is a huge *step* in the right direction.

## New National Skills Academy for Manufacturing Opened

On Thursday Labour's Trade and Industry Secretary, Alistair Darling, opened a £14m national academy in the West Midlands which is set to raise the UK's manufacturing skill set.

This fulfils one of Labour's 2005 manifesto commitments that I stood on at the last election and is further evidence that we are serious about raising the UK's skills level.

It will deliver courses designed by industry for industry training 40,000 students by 2012 with a focus on engineering and manufacturing skills to effectively compete with the growing economic power houses of India and China.

The Academy badge will be a stamp of quality training for employers the length and breadth of the country. I will make sure that when I am out and about in Chester I urge employers in to get involved.

## UK to sign human trafficking treaty

On Monday the Prime Minister held an event at No 10 to mark the 200 year anniversary of the abolition of slavery. It is sobering to think of the awful way that people were treated back then. But unfortunately in this day and age human trafficking means people face slavery in 2007.

I was really pleased that at the same event at No 10 the PM announced that the UK would sign up to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

This will enable us to give victims every support and strengthen our efforts to prosecute traffickers.

People and child trafficking is a terrible modern form of slavery that Labour are committed to tackling.

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## Humiliating final nail in the coffin for Cameron's 'A-list'

When that didn't work he said local Tories could pick who they want through 'open primaries' - with the result that one association even rejected the person chosen through that method.

The Conservative Home website, which closely monitors Tory selections, described the announcement as meaning that *"everybody on the candidates list, not just the priority list, will soon be able to apply for any seat"*. If true, this means the humiliating final nail in the coffin for Cameron's failed 'A-list'.

This week it was reported that there are to be further changes to Tory candidate selections - further evidence of David Cameron's failure to change his party.

First David Cameron said that all target and Tory-held seats would be expected to select from his so-called 'A-list'.

When they refused, he added a B-list and a C-list of candidates who weren't good enough to get through the first time round...