



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

14th May 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

The results are in and I am pleased to report that I have delivered against the ambitious targets you set for me when I became your Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Today's figures confirm that we surpassed our waiting times target despite strikes, and that waiting lists fell by 110,000 in March – the biggest monthly drop outside of Covid since 2008 – meaning that we are on track to achieve the fastest improvement in NHS waiting times in history.

The only question that matters in government is whether we leave our successors a better situation than we inherited. Ambulance response times for heart attacks and strokes are now the fastest in five years. A&E waiting times are improving, with four-hour waiting figures also the best in five years. We've recruited 2,000 more GPs and satisfaction has risen from 60 per cent to 74.5 per cent since we came to office. We hit our target of recruiting 8,500 mental health staff three years early. We've achieved this at the same as balancing the books for the first time in nine years and smashing the 2 per cent NHS productivity target by achieving 2.8 per cent, which means the investment we're putting in goes further and that the public can have greater confidence that their money is being well-spent.

None of this would have been achieved without the brilliant leadership team of ministers, officials, and special advisers we have established in the Department of Health and Social Care and the NHS – superbly led by Samantha Jones and Sir Jim Mackey, who has been a knight in shining armour and a brilliant leader of 1.5 million staff upon whom all this success depends.

The National Health Service is the embodiment of all that is best about Britain and our values. Thanks to our Labour government, it is on the road to recovery: lots done, but so much more to do.

These are all good reasons for me to remain in post, but as you know from our conversation earlier this week, having lost confidence in your leadership, I have concluded that it would be dishonourable and unprincipled to do so.

Last week's election results were unprecedented – both in terms of the scale of the defeat and the consequences of that failure. For the first time in our country's history, nationalists are in power in every corner of the United Kingdom – including a dangerous English nationalism represented by Nigel Farage and Reform UK. This represents both an existential threat to the future integrity of the United Kingdom, but Reform UK also represent a threat to the values and ideals that have made this country great. Progressives across our country understand this threat and our responsibility to confront it, but they are increasingly losing faith that the Labour Party is capable of rising to our historic responsibility of defeating racism and offering hope that Britain's best days lie ahead through social democracy.



There is no doubt that the unpopularity of this Government was a major and common factor in our defeats across England, Scotland and Wales. Good Labour people lost through no fault of their own. There are many reasons we could point to: from individual mistakes on policy like the decision to cut the winter fuel allowance to the 'island of strangers' speech, all of which have left the country not knowing who we are or what we really stand for.

You have many great strengths that I admire. You led our party to a victory few thought possible in 2024 and I was proud to fight alongside you in the trenches of that campaign. You have shown courage and statesmanship on the world stage – not least in keeping Britain out of the war in Iran.

But where we need vision, we have a vacuum. Where we need direction, we have drift. This was underscored by your speech on Monday. Leaders take responsibility, but too often that has meant other people falling on their swords. You also need to listen to your colleagues, including backbenchers, and the heavy-handed approach to dissenting voices diminishes our politics.

As a member of your government, I know better than most that governing is hard. It should be, because it matters. There are enormous challenges facing this country. For the first time in our history the next generation faces a worse inheritance than the last. We have wars raging in Europe and the Middle East that are making our challenges harder, not easier. We are in the foothills of a technological industrial revolution that has huge implications for every aspect of our lives – not least the future of work. It is not clear whether democracy or tyranny will define the 21st century. After the financial crisis, austerity, the disaster of Brexit, Liz Truss, the covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine and now the war in Iran, the country needs to believe again that things can be better than this and that politics is part of the answer, not the source of the problem. These are big challenges that require a bold vision and bigger solutions than we are offering.

It is now clear that you will not lead the Labour Party into the next general election and that Labour MPs and Labour Unions want the debate about what comes next to be a battle of ideas, not of personalities or petty factionalism. It needs to be broad, and it needs the best possible field of candidates. I support that approach and I hope that you will facilitate this.

Serving as your Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has been the greatest joy of my life and, regardless of our differences this week, I remain truly grateful to you for the opportunity to serve and I am deeply saddened to be leaving government in this way.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP