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## **Letters: NHS targets and best practice**

From Dr Bob Bury

Sir, Mr A. B. Ratcliffe (letter, July 21) asks why doctors are so opposed to target-setting in the health service when this is accepted as common practice in commerce.

Unlike the commercial sector, our targets are set by politicians who have little understanding of medicine and whose “event horizon” is the next election. Their purpose is to win votes, even if the consequent distortion of clinical priorities has an adverse effect on patient care.

Secondly, the manager of a business presumably employs realistic targets as a means to an end, whereas this Government seems to view the act of setting a target as an end in itself, regardless of the likelihood of anyone actually complying with it. This plucking of targets from the air, and the vilification of hard-working staff who fail to meet them, are among the chief reasons for the low level of morale throughout the public services.

Yours faithfully,  
BOB BURY,