

View from the House

The Chamber was crowded to hear the Prime Minister make a statement about the Chilcot Inquiry into the Iraq war. The Report was published after 7 years and 2.6 million words. The summary runs to 150 pages and there will 2 days of debate.

The main findings were already well known; that the evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction was flaky and did not support the case that Saddam Hussein, monstrous though he was, was an imminent threat. The report found that one of the key sources to the intelligence agencies was a fabricator. This was known before the war. The report also concludes that the legal basis for the invasion was far from satisfactory and the Cabinet did not test the legal advice sufficiently.

Only Robin Cook resigned from the Cabinet. The report does not back the claim that parliament was deliberately misled. If the Cabinet had questioned the quality of the intelligence and insisted the diplomatic route be given more time then there could have been a different outcome. Importantly Chilcot found that the unleashing of sectarian conflict although predicted by some was not given due consideration.

Lessons are already being learned. There is a separation between the intelligence gathered by the security services and the assessment of that evidence. Moreover the intelligence must be assessed before it is passed onto politicians.

As a member of the Health Select Committee, in 2010-15 I raised my concerns about the Care.data programme. I said that Care.data came with significant risks to patient data and before the scheme could proceed these risks must be properly managed. The programme was paused.

Patients must be aware whether their information has been passed on and to whom. Individuals should be asked for consent rather than having to opt out of this system; there should be appropriate safeguards to access patient data. The Select committee were told there were leaks of patient data.

I am delighted that the Department of Health has announced that they have decided to close the Scheme. So I asked the Leader of the House how much this failed project cost and to confirm that all patients information held under the Scheme would be shredded. He said he would ensure a Minister responds.

The Prime Minister has resigned. The leading Brexit campaigners have disappeared along with their claims about cash for the NHS. All parties must be included in finding the way forward for our country.

Valerie Vaz MP

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