

ANDREW MARR SHOW

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AM: Welcome. So is this more than glossy verbiage at the beginning of the year? What does it actually mean?

JG: Well, when Theresa came into office she set out that she wants to make Britain a country for everyone, not just the privileged few. And in talking about the Shared Society she's saying that she wants to make sure our country really has a level playing field where it doesn't matter where you're growing up, what your background is, or indeed tomorrow she'll be talking about mental health. If you suffer from mental health. Some of these burning injustices that people don't always show visibly but nevertheless have to deal with day-to-day need to be tackled, and what she's saying is that actually those issues aren't just going to fix themselves and she wants hers to be a government that does get in and try to sort them out for people.

AM: I can't think of any leading politician over the last 30 years who wouldn't agree with that. The question is: how is this different from David Cameron's Big Society? Was he not interested in these burning injustices?

JG: Well, the Big Society was much more about getting civil society part of helping to tackle many of the challenges that Britain faces. I think what the Prime Minister is talking about is the fact that we simply can't accept a country where you have a different chance of getting good education outcomes because of where you grow -

AM: So it's not civil society?

JG: We can't accept a country where if you're black you may have different chances of getting through the justice system. We can't accept a country where so many young people don't have the prospect of owning their own home in spite of doing all the right things, getting through university, working hard and getting a job

and saving. We can't accept a country, as she'll be setting out tomorrow, where for the many people who suffer mental health there's still in too many cases inadequate treatment. But also there's still stigma that goes along with that and needs to be tackled.

AM: I still don't really see the difference between this and what David Cameron was up about, but let's stick with – you mention health?

JG: I think difference is that the Prime Minister wants to set out how she feels government can be more front-footed to try and tackle these issues.

AM: Give me a really concrete example of what is going to change as a result of this.

JG: Well, we've already set out in my own area of education, that we want more good school places wherever children are in the country, including looking at –

AM: I'm sorry, every government wants more good school places -

JG: Well, we've set out our proposals to look at introducing more grammar schools where local communities want that. We'll be bringing forward more proposals around making sure that our technical education system really works for the more than 50 per cent of our young people who don't go to university in a way that it currently doesn't, and developing apprenticeships through the course of this parliament. All of those things are practical. But tomorrow she'll be setting out the first of a number of different areas, in this case mental health, where she does want government to be more involved in making sure that people get the kind of outcomes that they need to be successful.

AM: People can make their own minds up, but it does seem there's an element of this which is simply saying 'we are going to build houses, that is now the Shared Society, we're going to help

people with mental health problems, that is now the Shared – in other words it's re-badging and rebranding. But we can discuss that in greater detail. Let me ask you about the NHS. What is it about the Shared Society that means that we have the Red Cross talking about a humanitarian disaster in the NHS, calls for an extra £700 million of emergency funding to get us through the winter, and a real problem in hospitals across the country?

JG: Well, I, in my previous role in international development, have seen a number of humanitarian crises for myself, whether tackling ebola or the Nepal earthquake...

AM: Now apparently we have one on our doorstep.

JG: ... Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and the Syria crisis, and I don't think it's actually appropriate to describe the challenges that the NHS faces this winter as a humanitarian crisis. But I do think –

AM: The Red Cross are wrong about this?

JG: I don't think it's appropriate to describe it as a humanitarian crisis. I do think, coming back to your important question, we know the challenges that the NHS faces, whether it's in terms of a rising and indeed ageing population, the fact that drugs cost more and we can be treated for more things, and of course we also know that at this time of year in particular there are additional pressures on the NHS.

AM: They're really severe this year.

JG: And that means that we need, first of all, a long-term plan which is what Simon Stephens, the Chief Executive of the NHS came through with in 2015. We were the only party at the last election that backed that plan. Indeed, we've given the money that was requested for it, we also advanced that money and brought it through fast when that was requested. And specifically in relation to winter we have put in £400 million of extra funding to particularly help with winter pressures. And indeed the NHS is better prepared this year than it's been in the past.

AM: If you ask any professionals almost anywhere across the NHS they say we are in crisis, we have no spare beds, our hospitals are

full to bursting point, we're using the Red Cross to ferry people from hospitals in their Land Rovers, this is a really, really serious crisis, people are dying on hospital trolleys. The NHS needs even more money this winter and the Prime Minister should come to the House of Commons tomorrow to discuss this with MPs.

JG: Well, more money has been made available for this winter season.

AM: It's not enough, clearly.

JG: It's not unusual for the Red Cross – and indeed of course St John's Ambulance helps the health service every single day and does an amazing job. So the fact that the Red Cross and organisations like St John's are involved is not particularly unusual. We have put aside additional money, and in fact there's record investment going into the NHS, and if you look at bed occupancy –

AM: We have this terrible sterile debate where politicians say we've put in extra money and professionals on the front line say we are in total crisis, and the public scratches its head. At some point you're going to have to talk directly to them and give them more help.

JG: And indeed, you talked about bed occupancy, bed occupancy rates are actually slightly lower at this point this year than they were last year. But I think what I'm saying is there's a long-term challenge that the NHS faces and this first five-year plan from the NHS is about how to tackle some of the more underlying issues. There are of course challenges at this time of year, which is why, not only alongside the funding I talked about, there's also better planning in place.

AM: Sorry, do you think the doctors, do you think the NHS Federation, do you think all the professional bodies are simply crying wolf?

JG: No, I think NHS England has set out that actually we do need to be prepared to deal with the winter challenges that we've got. But overall we are dealing with those and will continue to make

sure that we work as a government with the NHS to do our best as the winter progresses.

AM: I've been talking to Nicola Sturgeon, who says that unless Britain stays in the single market then Scotland will have another independence referendum within just over two years or so. And she's not bluffing and it will happen. Do you think there is any chance at all of us staying in the single market?

JG: Well, the Prime Minister, as Ken said, will be setting out later this month more about our plans on how we want to make sure we can exit the European Union with a good deal for Britain.

AM: I'm sorry, he said that we need a proper plan by the end of January. Would you agree with that?

JG: I think the Prime Minister is going to set out more of the details in her own time. She has worked through with many of her Cabinet colleagues methodically the many, many areas that we need to have clear thinking in place for in relation to getting a strong negotiating proposal and plan in place to leave the European Union. We're going to get on with that. She's been very clear that we'll be triggering article 52 by the end of March. But I think it's been quite right that we've taken the time to pull together what is going to be one of the most complicated negotiations that any country has had to embark on.

AM: Will we finally be able to get an answer to the very obvious, clear and really important questions like whether we'll be in the single market, whether we'll be in the customs union, by the end of that period? We will have all the answers to that will we?

JG: I think the Prime Minister will take her own decision on how much she wants to disclose of the planning that's under way. But in the end I think if you look back to –

AM: It still feels as if we're being told absolutely nothing at all.

JG: And we are, months after the referendum, look back at the challenges that we faced within the EU. Many of those go back right to the very beginning, 40 years ago, when we went into the

European Union, arguably on a deal that wasn't good enough for us. And we were left with a legacy decades after. I think it's quite right that we now take the time to make sure we know exactly what the deal is that we want to try and get for our country and that we're well prepared to flexibly respond as the art of the deal emerges once that negotiation is in place.

AM: Nicola Sturgeon says it will be catastrophic for Scotland, and indeed the UK, to be outside the single market, and if that happens we will have a referendum and leave the UK. Do you think she's bluffing?

JG: Well, that's a matter for her in the end. It's pretty obvious to me that in spite of the referendum result in Scotland the SNP simply want to ignore that. They want to continue pushing the Scottish people against the decision that they voted to stay as part of the UK. I think that's wrong. So if politically that's the course she wants to take, I don't think it will be a sensible one. In the meantime we need to make sure that we have an approach on negotiating a fresh route for the UK outside of the European Union -

AM: Whatever that might be.

JG: - that's in our national interest and that can also critically stand the test of time and make sure that we're not just successful today but we're successful in 10-20-30 years' time.

AM: Justine Greening, thank you very much indeed.

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