

Health and Social Care Secretary sets out key priorities ahead of winter

Press release

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay will address the NHS workforce at the NHS Providers' annual conference.



- He is expected to set out his key priorities including a focus on what matters most to patients
- Focus will be on delivering for patients and making it as easy as possible for NHS and social care frontline staff to do their jobs

The Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay will today set out his plans to steer the health and care system through the upcoming winter and signal changes that will make the NHS better prepared for future “storms to come.”

Addressing the NHS Providers conference in Liverpool, Steve Barclay will say he will focus “on the areas that matter most to the patient experience” and measures which make it “as easy as possible” for frontline NHS and care workers to do their jobs.

In his first speech since returning to the role, Mr Barclay will outline his five key priorities for the months ahead:

- Supporting the workforce including through more staff for NHS 111 and 999
- Focusing on recovery plans across electives, urgent and emergency care
- Tackling the issue of delayed hospital discharge
- Improving access to primary care
- Ensuring a stronger future for health including maintaining momentum on the New Hospital Programme and investing in technology to improve patient outcomes

He will say:

We face the twin threats of Covid and flu, external pressures around energy and cost of living, and we enter the colder months without the breathing space that we might have usually had due to covid pressures over the summer.

So there is a huge amount to do to steer health and care through this storm and crucially, make the changes that will better prepare us for the storms to come.

He will add:

My focus will be on the areas that matter most to the patient experience.

On tackling the Covid backlogs the Secretary of State will emphasise the importance of close working between the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England to reduce variation in patient access and waiting times across the country. He will say he will be taking forward an approach that is “informed by the data” and “focuses attention where it is needed the most.”

He will also outline a need to invest in new technology and harness the opportunities of new ways of working shown by the pandemic including use of the NHS app to reduce pressures in primary care.

Looking beyond the immediate challenges of this winter, the Secretary of State will reiterate the need to ensure a stronger future for health and care including investment in NHS buildings and the need to modernise the way future hospitals are built as part of the government’s commitment to deliver 40 new hospitals by 2030.

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