

Matt Hancock speech to Conservative Party Conference 2018

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, speaking today at Conservative Party Conference at The ICC, Birmingham, said:

(Check against delivery)

"It's a real privilege to be Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

I love the NHS, and I want to talk about what we're going to do to make sure it's always there for you and your family...

...in the way it's always been there for mine.

Last year, my sister Emily had a near-fatal brain injury.

Her life was saved by the NHS at Southmead Hospital in Bristol.

Last month, I had the chance to go, with her, back to Southmead and say thank you.

They took us in from the helipad, where she'd been taken off the air ambulance ...

... in through A&E where they'd stabilised her...

... and into the Intensive Care Unit.

And as we went in, standing there, directly opposite, was the consultant who'd looked after her.

Until that moment, she couldn't remember anything about it.

But when she saw him, she knew exactly who he was and went over and gave him a great big hug.

It was an incredible moment.

And when she thanked him, his reply will always stick with me.

He said "It wasn't just me, it was the whole team."

And that sums up our NHS.

I love my sister, and the NHS saved her life.

So when I say I love the NHS, I really mean it.

But the truth is, they would have done this for anyone.

For my sister – for yours.

And what an honour it is to be in a position to be able to say thank you to the guy who saved your sister's life.

So my heartfelt thanks is not just from one brother to one doctor, or from one family to one hospital.

No.

The NHS is there for us all.

And I want to say this,

From everyone in this nation,

To every person who works in the NHS:

We salute you.

We value you.

And from the bottom of our hearts:

Thank you.

I'm proud of the NHS for what it's delivering today.

Cancer survival rates are at a record high.

Strokes are down by a third.

Deaths from heart failure down by a quarter.

And the NHS is doing more than ever.

39,000 more clinicians looking after patients than in 2010.

12,000 more nurses on our wards.

14,000 more doctors.

1 million more seen by cancer specialists each year.

2 million more operations.

3 million more treated in A&E.

And, the result of all this:

At every age and every stage of life, people are healthier than ever.

That's what our NHS is delivering under this Conservative Government.

But anyone who knows the NHS...

... also knows there are serious pressures, because our population is ageing and we're treating more people than ever before.

I know this.

It's clear to anyone.

Social care is under pressure too.

I know the pressures.

And we're going to address them.

Because I want us to make the NHS the best health service in the world.

And today I want to talk a bit about how.

First of all, it can't be done without more money.

The Prime Minister has committed an extra £20 billion over the next five years.

£20 billion.

It's the largest, longest financial settlement in the entire history of the NHS, and it'll underpin the NHS for the long term.

And when people ask that we spell out our domestic agenda – you tell them this.

We've taken this decision.

We have made our choice.

We have responded to the public mood and the clear needs of the service...

...with boldness.

Let me say: this policy is not without cost.

I know that.

And I know it's audacious.

But I profoundly believe it to be right, and I'm proud to serve a Prime Minister who believes it to be right too.

This money comes on stream next year.

But I want to help the NHS through this winter too.

I've already provided funding for hospitals to make upgrades to their buildings to deal with pressures this winter.

And I can announce that today I am making an extra £240 million available to

pay for social care packages this winter to support our NHS.

We'll use this money to get people who don't need to be in hospital...

...but do need care...

... back home...

...back into their communities...

...so we can free up those vital hospital beds...

... and help people who really need it, get the hospital care they deserve.

But money alone isn't enough.

We need to make sure that money's well spent, by reforming the NHS and social care system too...

... to make sure it's always there for you and your family.

So, along with the NHS themselves, we're writing a long term plan to guarantee its future.

And I'm hugely grateful to my departmental team who are working together with me on these reforms:

Steve Barclay,

Caroline Dinéage,

Jackie Doyle-Price,

Steve Brine,

James O'Shaughnessy,

Wendy Morton,

Alex Chalk,

and Maggie Throup.

It's great working as part of this team, pulling together.

And I tell you this, as a party, we've got to pull together.

Because we saw with Labour last week the frightening prospect for our country if we fail.

They've got nothing new and every time their programme's been tried, it's failed and brought misery on millions.

It's our duty to make sure it doesn't happen again.

One of the major reforms we need to see is bringing new technology across the health and care system.

And obviously I've been able to consult widely about this in the last few days...

... because CCHQ's given everyone my phone number.

Of course introducing new technology can be bumpy.

But the potential benefits are huge.

But the NHS is still the biggest buyer of fax machines in the country...

...maybe even the world.

And this is putting even greater pressures on our NHS staff.

In some hospitals a nurse still goes round with a clip board to find out where beds are in use and where they're empty.

It doesn't have to be that way.

In Derriford Hospital in Plymouth where I was on a nightshift with Johnny Mercer last week...

... they've developed an in-house programme so everyone knows where the empty beds are all the time.

Patients get better treatment and it's so much easier for staff.

So we're going to sort out the technology in the NHS, because our NHS deserves better.

Of course, it's not just about sorting the IT.

It's about seizing the huge cutting edge opportunities.

Let's take one example.

Today, it takes on average more than 5 years to diagnose rare diseases with endless tests and trial treatments.

But thanks to the 100,000 genome project, now, by combining your own gene sequence with machine learning on others, you can be diagnosed in days.

And what's more, from just a swab of saliva, there's the potential to design a drug specifically to treat your unique biological code.

In this city, the university hospital is growing replicas of people's cancers in the lab to test individual drugs to see if they destroy the cancer before subjecting the patient to that drug.

It increases the chance of cure and it reduces the agony of unsuccessful

treatments.

It's unbelievable and it's happening right here in Birmingham.

And I'm so proud that it's thanks to a decision by David Cameron and this Conservative Government that this is happening at all.

I want to go further.

So I can announce today that we're expanding our 100,000 genome project so one million whole genomes will now be sequenced...

... with a long term vision of 5 million...

... and I want to make it available to all.

And what this means in practice for you and your family is this.

From today, our brand new NHS Genomic Medicine Service will roll out access to genomic testing.

So for everyone with a rare cancer, and for all seriously ill children, it'll be available on the NHS...

... so we'll have tailor made treatments and tailor made drugs that are the best fit for a patient not a best guess.

We're leading the world, and I'm incredibly excited about this technology because of its potential to change lives for the better.

It's just one example. But it shows the kind of reform we need to make sure the NHS is the best health service in the world.

But new technology is not enough to make the health and social care system sustainable.

We need other reforms too.

We've got to reform the system...

...so we spend more time on prevention not cure...

...with more integration between health and social care...

...and more treatment closer to home.

What I mean by this, is that the era of moving all activity into fewer larger hospitals...

...and blindly, invariably, closing community hospitals...

...that era is over.

I want more services closer to the communities they serve.

And I want us to empower people to have more control over their own health too.

Whether it's the rising risk of obesity, the scourge of gambling addiction, or the growing challenge of mental illness...

...these problems, and the increasing demands they put on our health service, can only truly be solved by prevention as much as cure.

We can't go on treating them just as medical problems.

We need to look after people as people, not just as patients...

...and foster a culture less popping pills and Prozac...

...and more prevention and perspiration.

That includes acting on new evidence and interventions to support people with obesity and other conditions...

...whether it be through prescribing exercise, the arts, or nutritional advice...

...rather than yet more drugs and medical interventions.

Or in the language I prefer to use – it's common sense.

We need reforms of social care too, to make it sustainable for the long term.

So people don't have to fear the risk of losing everything...

... if for a reason outside their control they end up needing care when they're old.

Reform of social care is long overdue...

... and we'll publish a paper later this year setting out the progress we can make to give all people confidence and dignity in old age.

And of course, we can't do any of these reforms without our GPs.

Our GPs are the bedrock of the NHS.

They're everyone's first port of call.

We need more of them, better supported, and better equipped.

Prevention of ill health is nothing without primary care.

So we back our nation's GPs every step of the way.

Now, I believe that this need for reform...

...does not simply lie with the NHS or our social care system.

We too, as a party, must be driven by this imperative of reform.

We've always been at our best when we've been reforming...

... when we look to the future.

Who abolished slavery in the 19th century?

Who delivered equal votes for women in the 20th?

Who brought in equal marriage in the 21st?

Not the Whigs, or the Liberals, or the Labour party.

It was the Conservative party.

Throughout history we've shown we're at our best when we're in favour of the future...

... not fixated on the past.

But it's more than that.

We can't just be comfortable with Modern Britain.

We've got to be the champions of Modern Britain.

Pro jobs, pro business, pro prosperity...

... helping everyone who wants to achieve...

...to achieve their potential.

We can't fear the future...

... we've got to embrace the future.

We embrace the future or we embrace defeat.

The Conservative party is the party that's always understood the spirit of this great nation.

That spirit today calls for opportunity for all...

...without fear or favour.

Now more than ever...

... we've got to give it all we've got...

... because our opponents are not resting either.

So let us unite together.

Let us embrace our NHS...

... let us embrace reform...

... and with everything we have...

...let us serve this great nation we love.”

ENDS

For further information, please contact the Press Office on 020 7984 8121.