

Press release: Record NHS funding to give patients a better alternative to hospital

More NHS patients will be cared for at home and in their community to avoid them going into or staying in hospital unnecessarily, Theresa May announced today.

Ahead of a visit to a north London health centre she pledged to cut needless hospital admissions and help inpatients return home sooner – through community-based rapid response teams and dedicated support for care home residents.

The 24/7 rapid response teams are made up of doctors, nurses and physiotherapists and will provide urgent care and support in the community as an alternative to hospital. This includes emergency treatment as well as support to help patients recover closer to home, which will help people stay healthy and independent for longer.

The Prime Minister set out a major new investment in primary and community healthcare – worth £3.5 billion a year in real terms by 2023/4 – which builds on the existing NHS budget for these services.

This represents a historic commitment to ensure a growing share of overall NHS spending for primary medical and community healthcare.

Today's announcement forms a key part of the Long Term Plan for the NHS – which is the biggest ever cash boost for the health service. We can make this commitment, which was fully funded at the Budget, because of our strong public finances –and the fact we will no longer be sending an annual membership subscription to the EU.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Too often people end up in hospital not because it's the best place to meet their needs but because the support that would allow them to be treated or recover in their own home just isn't available.

Many of us might assume that hospital is the safest place to be – but in reality many patients would be much better off being cared for in the community.

And the longer a patient stays in hospital the more it costs the NHS and the more pressure is put on its hardworking staff. This needs to change.

That's why I'm announcing a major boost in funding for community healthcare, which will give more patients a genuine and high-

quality alternative to hospital.

The new approach we're setting out today will mean more people can leave hospital quicker, or avoid being admitted in the first place – which is better for patients and better for the health service.

Leaving the EU means taking back control of our money as we will no longer be sending vast sums to Brussels. This helps our public finances and means we have more money to spend on domestic priorities like our NHS. And we've been able to fully fund this historic commitment without raising taxes.

As many as a third of people in hospital stay longer than they need to, often because they can't get treatment close to home.

As well as the pressure it puts on the health service, staying in hospital can be bad for patients' health. The evidence shows that for older people, ten days in a hospital bed leads to the equivalent of ten years of muscle ageing – risking their health and reducing their independence.

Analysis suggests that over a third of hospital admissions from care homes are avoidable.

The Prime Minister has set out a further measure today that will help care home residents get more personalised, convenient and timely care where they live.

She announced the national roll-out of a successful pilot that sees healthcare professionals assigned to care homes where they get to know individual residents' needs and can provide tailored treatment and support. The teams include pharmacists and GPs who can also offer emergency care out of hours.

Offering an alternative to hospital and caring for people at home instead is better for patients and the health service.

Community healthcare can improve patients' health, reduce costs for the NHS, ease pressure on staff, free up much-needed beds and help cut waiting times by allowing hospitals to focus their resources where they are needed most – such as elective surgery.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

GPs are the bedrock of the NHS. To make the NHS sustainable for the long term we need more prevention as well as cure. So we will back our GPs, primary and community healthcare to help keep people healthy and out of hospital in the first place. Every patient deserves to receive care tailored to their needs. Yet too often our hospitals become the only place to turn for older people, often to the detriment of their health – but no longer.

The Prime Minister and I are determined to ensure more people are able to receive care in their communities or at home, taking the pressure of our hard working NHS staff.

This additional funding of £3.5 billion a year by 2023/24 demonstrates our commitment to primary and community healthcare, capable of relieving the burden on our hospitals over the coming years and revolutionising the way high-quality care is delivered for our most vulnerable patients.

Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England, said:

Everyone can see that to future-proof the NHS we need to radically redesign how primary and community health services work together. For community health services this means quick response to help people who don't need to be in hospital, as well as dissolving the 70 year old boundary between GP practices and community nursing.

But to will the end is to will the means. That's why – as part of the NHS Long Term Plan – for the first time we're going to guarantee that these services get a growing share of the growing NHS budget.