

Statement to parliament: Secretary of State's oral statement on the NHS Long Term Plan

Mr Speaker, with permission, I would like to make a statement about the NHS Long Term Plan.

The plan sets out how we will guarantee the NHS for the future. It describes how we will use the largest funding settlement in the history of the NHS to strengthen it over the next decade, rising to the challenges of today and seizing the opportunities of the future.

It's worth taking a moment to reflect on when the NHS was first proposed from this dispatch box by Churchill's Government in 1944.

When even after the perils of war, infant mortality was nearly 10 times now, when two-thirds of men smoked and life expectancy was just 66.

Ten years before we knew the structure of DNA, 4 decades before the first MRI.

The NHS has throughout its history led the world. But one constant has been that core principle set out by the national government – that the NHS should be available to all, free at the point of use, according to need, not ability to pay.

Mr Speaker, as last year's 70th anniversary celebrations proved, the NHS is one of our proudest achievements.

We all have an emotional connection to it, our own family story, and we all owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the people who make the NHS what it is, and work so hard, especially during the winter months when the pressures are greatest.

Because we value the NHS so much, the new £20.5 billion funding settlement announced by the Prime Minister in June provides the NHS with funding growth of 3.4% a year in real terms over the next 5 years.

This means the NHS's budget will increase in cash terms by £33.9 billion, rising from £115 billion this year to:

- £121 billion next year
- £127 billion in 2020 to 2021
- £133 billion in 2021 to 2022
- £140 billion in 2022 to 2023
- and then £148 billion in 2023 to 2024

This rise of over , over £1 billion more in cash terms than proposed in June, delivers on our commitment to the NHS and will safeguard the NHS for the long

term.

This will help address today's challenges. The NHS is facing unprecedented levels of demand. Every day, the NHS treats over 1 million people.

Last year, NHS staff carried out 2 million more operations and saw over 11 million more outpatients compared to 2010.

Despite record demand, performance was better this December than last.

As well as addressing today's challenges, the NHS Long Term Plan sets the NHS up to seize the opportunities of the future.

At the heart of this plan is the principle that prevention is better than cure.

In the future, the NHS will do much more to support people to stay healthy, rather than just treat them when ill.

So, first, the biggest increase in funding – at least £4.5 billion – will go to primary and community care, because GPs are the bedrock of the NHS.

That means patients will have improved access to their GPs and greater flexibility about how they contact them.

Better use of community pharmacists, better access to physiotherapists, and improving the availability of fast and appropriate care to help communities keep people out of hospital altogether.

Next, the principle is that organisations across the NHS, local councils, innovators, and the voluntary sector, will all work more closely together so that they can focus on what patients need.

Next, there will be a renewed clampdown on waste so we can ensure every penny of the extra money goes towards improving services and giving taxpayers the best possible return.

Mr Speaker, ultimately staff are the heart of the NHS – the people who work in the NHS. And the Long Term Plan commits to major reforms to improve working conditions for NHS staff, because morale matters.

Staff will receive better training and more help with career progression. They will have greater flexibility in their work, be supported by the latest technology that works for them, and be helped more with their own mental health and wellbeing.

This already happens in the best parts of the NHS and there's been a huge amount of work to support the people who work in the NHS. But I want to see it happen everywhere.

We will bring in training, mentoring and support to develop better leadership in the NHS at all levels.

We will build on work already going on to recruit, train and retain more staff so we can address critical staff shortages.

The plan published today is the next step in our mission to make the NHS a world-class employer and deliver the workforce the NHS needs.

To deliver on these commitments, I have asked Baroness Dido Harding to chair a rapid programme of work, which will engage with staff, employers, professional organisations, trade unions, think tanks and others to build a workforce implementation plan that puts NHS people at the heart of NHS policy and delivery.

Baroness Harding will provide interim recommendations to me by the end of March on how the challenges of supply, reform, culture and leadership can be met, and final recommendations later in the year as part of the broader Implementation Plan that will be developed at all levels to make the Long Term Plan a reality.

Mr Speaker, that is the approach we will be taking to support the NHS over the next decade, but what does it mean for patients and the wider public?

It means patients receiving high-quality care closer to home.

Supporting our growing elderly population to stay healthy and independent for longer.

More personalised care, more social prescribing, empowering people to take greater control and responsibility over their own health through prevention, and personal health budgets.

It means access to new digital services to bring the NHS into the 21st century.

More support for mothers by improving maternity services, more support for parents and carers in the early years of a child's life so we can be the best place in the world – and this country can be the best place to be born, in every sense.

We will improve how the NHS cares for children and young people with learning disabilities and autism by ending inappropriate hospitalisation, reducing over-medicalisation, and providing quality care in the community.

The NHS will tackle unacceptable health inequalities by targeting support towards the most vulnerable in areas of high deprivation.

And to help make a reality of the goal of parity of esteem between mental and physical health, we are going to increase mental health service budgets not by £2 billion, but £2.3 billion a year.

For the first time ever, we will introduce waiting time targets for community mental health so that people get the treatment they need when they need it.

And we will expand services for young people to include people up to the age

of 25.

Mr Speaker, the Long Term Plan focuses on the most common causes of mortality, including cancer, heart disease, stroke and lung disease.

The health service will take a more active role in helping people to cut their risk factors: stopping smoking, losing weight and reducing alcohol intake.

The NHS will improve the quality and speed of diagnosis and improve treatment and recovery so we can help people to live well and manage their conditions.

And we will upgrade urgent care so people can get the right care more quickly.

All in all, Mr Speaker, the NHS Long Term Plan has been drawn up by the NHS: by over 2,500 doctors, clinicians, staff, and patients.

It will continue to be shaped and refined by staff and patients through an implementation plan framework in the spring, with events and activities across the country to help people understand what it means for them and their local NHS services.

The experts who wrote the plan say it will lead to 150,000 heart attacks, strokes and dementia cases prevented, 55,000 more people surviving cancer each year – in all, half a million lives saved over the next ten years. Funded by taxpayers, designed by doctors, delivered by this government.

It's an important moment in the history of the NHS.

Our Long Term Plan will ensure the NHS continues to be there, free at the point of use, based on clinical need, not ability to pay, better resourced with more staff.

Newer technology with new priorities, fit for the future, so it is always there, in our hour of need.

And I am proud to commend this statement to the House.