

The British public voted for £350m a week for the NHS. We will...

Huge funding boost will create an NHS fit for the 21st century

Comment



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HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SECRETARY

In a matter of weeks, the NHS turns 70, and the country will come together to celebrate an institution that turns heads across the globe.

From unleashing the era of mass vaccinations in the Fifties, to delivering world-leading breakthroughs like IVF and radiotherapy in the Sixties and Seventies, to trailblazing cancer screening programmes in the Eighties, the NHS has defined what a modern health system should be.

Today, as the Prime Minister announces a historic long-term funding boost and ten-year plan for the health service, we are backing the NHS to show the world what a cutting-edge 21st century healthcare system can look like, too. The new investment will see the NHS budget increase in real terms by over £20 billion a year in five years compared with today.

Labour like to talk big on the NHS, but it is a basic political fact that they will never grow the economy, create the jobs or generate the tax income that are a vital pre-requisite to funding our NHS properly.

In fact, this extra funding is greater than Labour's NHS spending pledge during the last election. It recognises the superhuman efforts made by staff over the last few years to maintain services in the face of rapidly growing demand. But it also presents a big opportunity for the NHS to write an entirely new chapter in its history. With a million more people aged over 75 to treat in the next 10 years, I've always felt we have a clear choice - to muddle through with temporary fixes, or be bold and approach this challenge more strategically.

I've been making the case for a long-term plan for some time now; with our population ageing and increasing, ever more people need more frequent and more complex care from the NHS. It takes seven years to train up new doctors, so the only responsible course of action is to plan ahead.

This settlement gives the NHS the

space and certainty to do that - and with it an obligation to deliver a comprehensive plan to transform health and care services and ensure that our children and grandchildren benefit from the very best healthcare.

The British public love their health service fiercely, and undoubtedly want it to be the top priority for their hard-earned tax contributions. But they are also rightly demanding about stamping out waste and inefficiency.

With new technology coming down the track, and today's promise of long-term certainty over budgets to allow strategic planning, there is no reason why we should not maintain or beat the record-breaking productivity gains we've seen over the last five years. With those type of efficiency gains, we can use this new funding to deliver the improvements people desperately want from their NHS.

Our cancer survival rates still lag behind the best Western European countries. Every family in the country - including mine - has been touched by cancer and if we are going to have the best health service we need to continue to improve our cancer survival rates.

Another example is mental health. We have embarked on one of the biggest expansions in mental health services in the Europe, but still people wait too long for treatment in a way we would never tolerate for a stroke or broken leg. There has been a dramatic, positive shift in attitudes towards mental health issues in recent years, and this disparity is no longer tenable. So let's make sure we tackle these waits.

Finally, we have taken some major steps forward in quality and safety, but we know that every week the NHS makes multi-million pound settlements to families affected by catastrophic brain injuries - it's time to end this scandal and aim to make the NHS one of the safest places to give birth in the world.

This long-term plan and historic funding boost is a fitting birthday present for our most loved institution.

The debate over Brexit can be divisive, but that famous campaign promise can now unite us all: the British public voted for £350m a week for the NHS, and that - and more - is exactly what this Government will deliver.

The British public voted for £350m a week for the NHS. We will deliver that - and more, writes Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt for the Telegraph.