

Tonight's news confirms the worst fears of patients and staff: another winter crisis has arrived – Jonathan Ashworth

Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to the news that NHS England has extended the deferral of routine hospital appointments to the 31st January, said:

"Tonight's news confirms the very worst fears of patients and staff: another winter crisis has arrived.

"Despite the heroic efforts of our fantastic NHS staff, Theresa May's reassurances have proved meaningless and hollow. Tory underfunding and cuts have left our health service more vulnerable than ever before.

"Jeremy Hunt must urgently tell us how many elective operations he expects to be cancelled and how many more people will be waiting longer in pain and anguish because their scheduled operation has had to be cancelled.

"What's more, the suspension of sanctions for mixed sex accommodation breaches is just one more humiliating indication of just how shocking the downturn has become. Already, tens of thousands of patients have been left stuck in the back of ambulances, sometimes waiting well in excess of 12 hours in packed hospital corridors.

"As the NHS enters its 70th year, the truth is that Tory neglect has left it underfunded, understaffed and overstretched. Ministers must get an urgent grip of this escalating crisis."