

Protecting and improving our National Health Service

Our commitment to you:

Our National Health Service must be there for you throughout your life. We will:

- ***continue to increase spending on the NHS, supported by a strong economy, so the NHS stays free for you to use***
- ***spend at least an additional £8 billion by 2020 over and above inflation to fund and support the NHS's own action plan for the next five years***
- ***ensure you can see a GP and receive the hospital care you need, 7 days a week by 2020, with a guarantee that everyone over 75 will get a same-day appointment if they need one***
- ***integrate health and social care, through our Better Care Fund***
- ***lead the world in fighting cancer and finding a cure for dementia***

The NHS is vitally important to all of us. Founded on the principle that no one should ever have to worry about their ability to pay for their healthcare, it is a profound expression of our values as a nation.

Patients, doctors and nurses are the experts on how to improve people's health. So we have given greater power and accountability to the frontline than any other government. We cleared out bureaucracy, generating savings which we have invested in care for patients. Instead of chasing managerial targets, we have focused on outcomes and performance. And we have given patients more power by providing them with more information.

Under Labour, micro-management from Whitehall clogged-up the system. A cover-up culture developed, where doctors and nurses were scared to speak out about the appalling standards of care at hospitals in places such as Stafford and Morecambe Bay. By the time Labour left office, our cancer survival rates lagged far behind those of other countries, and more than 18,000 patients had been waiting for over a year to start their treatment.

We are putting things right. We protected the NHS budget. Our doctors and nurses are now doing over a million more operations each year than in 2010. Our Cancer Drugs Fund has given more than 60,000 people access to life-saving drugs. We have doubled funding for dementia research. Hospital infections have halved. An independent think tank, the Commonwealth Fund, has found that under the Conservatives the NHS has become the best healthcare system of any major country. And patients are reporting the highest levels of satisfaction for years. The NHS is performing well in the face of increasing demand, with fewer patients waiting longer than the 18, 26 and 52 week targets than in May 2010. We have slashed the number of people who wait over a year for the treatment they need, from over 18,000 to under 500.

Despite this progress, our NHS faces major challenges. An ageing population will place more pressure on health and social care, and life-saving but expensive new drugs will push up costs. And for years it's been too hard to access the NHS out of hours, even though sudden illness and events which you and your family cannot plan for do not respect normal working hours. We will rise to these challenges. By building a strong economy, we will be able to increase spending in real terms every year. With a future Conservative Government, you will have a truly 7-day NHS, at the frontier of science, offering you new drugs and treatments, safeguarded for years to come.

We are building an NHS that is more efficient, more effective and more accountable