

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

18th January 2019

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me NHS waiting times.

As our population ages, demand for the NHS continues to rise. I would like to commend the dedication compassion of our NHS staff, and assure you that the Government is taking clear steps to support the NHS, and ensure it offers the world's finest healthcare.

I appreciate your concern about waiting times in the NHS. Many NHS trusts have faced difficulty in meeting their waiting time targets thanks to acute challenges this winter. The NHS sets exceptionally high waiting time standards, and the Government works with bodies like NHS Improvement to make sure they are delivered throughout the health service. The NHS mandate has set clear goals for the health service, and I am confident that they will be achieved.

Not only is the Government increasing NHS investment by over £20 billion in real terms over the coming five years, it is making progress on reforms which will reduce waiting times, and alleviate pressures on the NHS. Through the £3.6 billion investment in the Better Care Fund, and the NHS's continuing implementation of its own plan for the future, the Five Year Forward View, I believe the proper integration of health and social care over the next three years will be of huge benefit to the NHS and patients alike. Excellent progress is being made. Compared to five years ago, nearly half a million more people are treated within 18 weeks of referral; and I am happy to say that safety in the NHS continues to improve.

Over the next five years, as part of the NHS Long Term Plan, the local NHS is being given enough money to grow the amount of planned surgery year-on-year, to cut long waits, and reduce the waiting list. The ability of patients to choose where they have their treatment remains a powerful tool for delivering improved waiting times and patient experiences of care. The NHS will continue to provide patients with a wide choice of options for quick elective care, including making use of available Independent Sector capacity. These steps come alongside measures to offer patients the choice of quick telephone or online consultations, saving time waiting and travelling.

The Long Term Plan sets out that a review of A&E waiting time standards is taking place within NHS England. The Department of Health and Social Care will consider the conclusions of the review once it's been completed. This must be clinically led to enable best delivery of care for patients.

I believe this mandate will uphold the founding ideals of the NHS as it continues to celebrate its 70th anniversary, and provide the health service with the resources and guidance to face the challenges of today's ongoing social, demographic and technological change.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

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