



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Stephen Hammond MP
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The Rt Hon George Howarth MP
By email to: george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk

Dear George,

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 January to Matt Hancock on behalf of a number of your constituents about the NHS.

I appreciate your constituents' concerns about waiting times for treatment.

The NHS Constitution sets out the right of patients to start consultant-led treatment within a maximum of 18 weeks from referral for non-urgent conditions. If this is not possible, the NHS must take all reasonable steps to offer a suitable alternative provider that can treat them sooner, if this is clinically appropriate and it is what the patient wants.

The *NHS Long Term Plan* will transform patient care and make sure every penny of taxpayers' money is spent wisely. The NHS has been able to produce the Plan thanks to the Government's investment of £20.5 billion a year in real terms by 2023/24.

The Plan focuses on prevention of ill-health and boosting services closer to home.

The local NHS is being allocated sufficient funds over the next five years to increase the amount of planned surgery year on year in order to cut long waits and reduce waiting lists.

Additionally, outpatient services will be redesigned in order to reduce the need for face-to-face appointments in hospitals, saving patients time and freeing up medical and nursing time. To further improve waiting times and patient experience, patients will also continue to be able to choose where they are treated.

Finally, the Government has supported the NHS with an additional £1.6billion for 2018/19 to improve emergency and elective care. In addition, more than £420million has been provided specifically for this winter.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours ever

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S.H.', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

STEPHEN HAMMOND