



# Challenges facing the NHS in England: a guide for MPs and Peers

**This guide sets out the key challenges for health and care services in England, the progress already made by our members converting words into action and the next steps most urgently needed over the course of this Parliament.**

**The NHS Confederation represents more than 500 NHS organisations that commission and provide NHS services, including hospitals, community and mental health providers, ambulance trusts and independent sector organisations providing NHS care. It is the only membership body to bring together and speak on behalf of the whole NHS.**

## What are the challenges facing health and care?

The next five years represent a critical period of transformation in health and care services. Changes in how people live their lives and the success of the NHS in keeping people alive for longer means demand for care is rapidly rising. The needs of people are now very different from patients in 1948. Many millions of people now need a long-term relationship with an NHS that supports them to live with ongoing health conditions as well as possible. There is a huge degree of consensus across leading health and care organisations that there are seven key challenges facing the health and care system as a whole.

To meet these challenges we need to make improvements in how we deliver care – which will require some up-front investment. Moreover, the NHS needs to find at least £22 billion of efficiency savings by 2020.<sup>1</sup> Some of the changes required may be controversial, many services will need to be redesigned by our

members, to deliver radically different models of care which better fit the needs of all people, reflect advances in technology and treatments. Moreover, we need to examine innovative ways to overcome historic boundaries between organisations which get in the way of seamless care for patients.

## What does the public think?

Recent polling shows the public understand the root causes of the challenges facing the NHS, with 79 per cent thinking that rising demand for care is due to an ageing population. 76 per cent of people said they would support changes to their local NHS services provided there was evidence they would improve care. The public also want more information so they can take part in a debate about the future of the NHS – only 40 per cent think they have the necessary knowledge to be able to contribute to this debate.<sup>2</sup>

## The 2015 Challenge Declaration – challenges facing health and care

- 1 The need challenge**  
Meeting the rising demand for care, particularly from people with complex needs or long-term conditions, while maintaining people's wellbeing and preventing ill health for as long as possible.
- 2 The culture challenge**  
Building confidence in the health service by achieving a fundamental shift in culture from the bottom up. Creating a more open and transparent NHS, which enables patients, citizens and communities to be partners in decisions, and staff to improve care.
- 3 The design challenge**  
Redesigning the health and care system to reflect the needs of people now – and so that it remains sustainable in the future. Shifting more care closer to people's homes, while maintaining great hospital care. A focus on joining up all parts of the health and care system so care revolves around the needs and capacities of individuals, families and communities.
- 4 The finance challenge**  
Recognising the financial pressures on all parts of the system and squeezing value from every penny of public money spent on health and care. Debating honestly and openly the future levels and sources of funding of health and social care.
- 5 The leadership challenge**  
Creating value-based, system leaders across the NHS and empowering them to improve health and wellbeing for local people. Supporting these local leaders to work in partnership with a wide range of health, care and related organisations to address the 2015 Challenge, involve patients and citizens as leaders, and have the resilience to make the biggest changes in the recent history of health and care.
- 6 The workforce challenge**  
Planning for a workforce to better match changing demand. Developing staff roles and skills to provide complex, multidisciplinary, coordinated care, in partnership with individuals and communities and more often in community settings.
- 7 The technology challenge**  
Using technology to help transform care and enabling people to access information and treatment in a way that meets their needs. Spreading innovation to improve the quality of care while responding to the financial challenge facing the NHS and care system.

## What does the future health and care system look like?

Our vision is an empowered health population supported by world-class health and care services

### In the future we want:

- ✓ individuals to be empowered to shape their care around their needs, aspirations and capabilities
- ✓ the public to have a real say in their services
- ✓ care to be compassionate and joined-up
- ✓ services to invest in preventing illness and keeping people healthy
- ✓ every organisation to strive continually to improve quality and safety
- ✓ services to innovate and embrace new technologies
- ✓ all staff to be engaged, valued and equipped to work in new ways
- ✓ real and continued progress on eliminating discrimination and reducing inequalities in outcomes
- ✓ the NHS to use its finite resources efficiently, fairly and sustainably.

# What does the NHS need from the Government?

While progress has been made by the former Coalition Government and the national arms-length bodies (Care Quality Commission, NHS England, Monitor, NHS Trust Development Authority, Health Education England, Public Health England) there is much more headway to be made.

There is a huge degree of consensus across leading health and care organisations on the key challenges facing the health and care system. Recognising the once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform patient care, this collective voice, known as the 2015 Challenge partnership, comprising of health and patient care charities, local government, staff and leaders, have set out 15 asks for the Government in *The 2015 Challenge Manifesto: a time for action*. This route map to a sustainable health and care system must be an integral part of the decisions made in the Government's first Budget and Spending Review and broader policy programme for health and care.

During the election period, our members welcomed improvements and commitments signalled by all political parties towards the 15 key asks. The rhetoric must now be matched with action by the Government, with cross-party support, in this Parliament, especially in the following critical areas:

1. **Stability:** If we are to tackle the big challenges, the NHS needs stability. The Government must be mindful of the disastrous impact any centrally driven reorganisation could have on local efforts to improve care. We would urge the Government to commit to the principles set out in the Five Year Forward View and by the 2015 Challenge partnership.
2. **Finances:** The gap between rising demand for care and the funding available by 2020 will be at least £30 billion. That can be closed by two means – income and efficiency. With the extra funding set out in the Five Year Forward View, the NHS will need to find unprecedented efficiency savings of at least £22 billion. If the funding is not found, then our members will need to find further efficiencies or cut services for patients. Politicians must be candid with the public about the huge scale of the savings and increases in productivity required over the next Parliament. It means our members will need to fundamentally change the way we provide care for millions of patients, which itself will require funds for 'double running' services and investment in estates, IT and innovation.
3. **Workforce:** It's important that Government policies support the ability of local NHS organisations to deploy staff in the best way, to support high-quality and efficient patient care. The Government, through cross-party support, must help facilitate sustainable long-term workforce planning according to the needs of local communities. Any increase in staff will need to be backed by an appropriate increase in funding for the health service.
4. **Social care:** Plans for social care funding need to be clearer, recognising the vital role social care plays in keeping people with long-term illnesses as well as possible, for as long as possible. Our members tell us that when social care is cut, this increases pressures on the NHS.
5. **Mental health:** Building on progress during the last Parliament, we need firm plans to make mental health services as available and accessible as those for physical health, with the right investment.

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## Key areas where you can support the NHS

Over the course of this Parliament, we want MPs and Peers to be frank with the public about the scale of the challenges and the extent of the changes. This should be reflected by holding constructive debates in Parliament.

It is also critical that the areas mentioned above remain high on the political agenda in parliamentary committees, parliamentary questions, in relevant all party parliamentary groups and in relevant parliamentary legislation.

There will be many local areas where debates will be happening about the future of local services. It's right that MPs play a key role in these discussions. We encourage MPs to engage with both our members and patients in their respective constituencies on the tough choices needed if we are to sustain our vision of a world-class health and care system.

## What will the NHS do in return?

This is not just down to politicians. Leaders at all levels of health and care, and in all local areas, need to build on progress made so far and drive the changes required. They will do so working in partnership: with people who use the NHS and social care and the public; with their staff; and as peers in local systems with each other. In return for political support, health and care leaders will need to:

- look beyond the boundaries of their own organisations and work in new and innovative partnerships with other sectors, such as housing, in their local area and to improve people's care
- support patients, carers and citizens to get involved with and shape health and care decisions
- engage health and social care professions, harnessing their ideas to improve care
- support health and social care professionals to take on leadership roles.

## How can the NHS Confederation help you?

Please get in touch if you want further details on any of the issues raised in this guide or would like to discuss the challenges facing the NHS. We can provide information and briefings ahead of parliamentary debates on the key issues affecting the NHS and can put you in touch with local NHS organisations.

For more information, please contact Ben Cook, Public Affairs Manager: [ben.cook@nhsconfed.org](mailto:ben.cook@nhsconfed.org)

You can visit our website at [www.nhsconfed.org](http://www.nhsconfed.org) or follow us on Twitter at [@nhsconfed](https://twitter.com/nhsconfed)

## References

1. The NHS Five Year Forward View was published on 23 October 2014 by NHS England in partnership with Public Health England, Monitor, Health Education England, the Care Quality Commission and the NHS Trust Development Authority. It sets out a vision for the future of the NHS and the framework for further detailed planning about how the NHS needs to evolve over the next five years. [www.nhsconfed.org/FYFV](http://www.nhsconfed.org/FYFV)
2. [www.nhsconfed.org/polling](http://www.nhsconfed.org/polling)