



IT'S YOUR NHS

DEVELOPING A MORE PERSONAL SERVICE

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The NHS is being transformed to improve services and ensure it meets the needs of people today.

For most people, the ideal health service has always been one which provides the best quality care with the best possible treatment and the fairest and fastest access, in the most convenient – usually local – setting. This means investing in capacity increases for everyone throughout the country.

Spending has increased from £33 to £67 billion a year and is already ensuring that there are more beds, drugs, treatments and staff. This will increase to £92 billion a year by 2008.

Today's patients expect a standard and quality of health care far greater than in the past and also expect more information, control, power and say in their own health care than ever before.

There is still a long way to go, but this leaflet outlines the improvements you can expect to see in the next four years.



Offering choice to patients

After waiting six months for a cataract operation at her local hospital, 81-year-old Kathleen Preston, from South Woodford, was given the choice of being treated more quickly at another hospital in London.

A week after choosing to go for treatment at St Mary's Hospitals NHS Trust, Kathleen had her pre-op assessment with her cataract operation being carried out the week after that. A patient care advisor talked her through the options and also organised free transport for all her visits.

"You don't realise what you have until it's gone," she says. "I enjoy seeing bright colours around me again and being able to drive when I want."

A healthier start for children

For families, children and carers in two of the most deprived parts of Hackney – the Mapledene Early Years Centre has become mainstay of local life.

From under one roof, Mapledene provides childcare and education for over 90 children between the ages of six months and five years.

One of the first 20 Children’s Centres to be launched as part of the Sure Start programme last year, its services include a health visitor and a dentist.

Caroline, whose two children are regulars at the centre, says: “My daughter was having eating difficulties and getting one virus after another and the Sure Start health visitor has given me some good advice on sorting this out.”



Maintaining NHS values

The NHS is still rooted in the same important core values. It will now have an increased emphasis on becoming a more personal, caring, high quality and fast service.

We are working towards an NHS which:

- Is fair to all of us and personal to each of us.
- Offers everyone equal access to, and the power to choose from services based on clinical need, not ability to pay.

We’ve laid the foundations

The NHS has consulted thousands of patients about the changes it should make and we are responding to what patients say is important. All improvements have been made possible by steady increases in the numbers of NHS staff and their hard work and commitment.



Better care for people with long-term illnesses

Walsall PCT identifies the most vulnerable older patients and uses specialist nurses to pro-actively manage their cases and co-ordinate their care.

The nurses each have a caseload and, working in the community, they visit or call patients daily, weekly or monthly depending on their condition.

Patient Brian Davies, who has a heart problem and suffers from asthma and diabetes, has been looked after by Lisa Brookes since November 2003. He says: "I have daily contact with Lisa – she gives me confidence and I don't know what I'd do without her. I get quite low at times and she is always on hand to help and reassure me."

Patients want faster access to their GP and faster treatment from hospitals, and we are making progress...

- 97% of patients are now able to see a GP within two days.
- The maximum waiting time for an outpatient appointment has fallen from 26 to 17 weeks.
- The maximum waiting time for an operation has fallen from 18 months to less than nine months.
- 94% of patients are seen, diagnosed and treated within four hours of arrival at casualty.

Patients want action on the biggest killers – especially cancer and heart disease, and services are now improving...

- A 10% increase in survival rates in under 75s for all major cancers.
- A one-quarter reduction in premature deaths from heart disease.
- The development of national guidelines for treating cancer, heart disease, diabetes and others to ensure consistency of care across the country.

Patients want more convenient care, closer to home, which is why...

- Growing numbers of patients are now accessing new and more convenient services such as NHS Direct, NHS Direct Online and NHS Walk-in Centres, instead of having to call a GP or go to A&E.

Patients want more modern facilities and buildings, which is why...

- 40 new hospital schemes have already opened and 30 more are in development.
- More hospital beds, critical care units and intermediate care facilities to support those leaving hospital.

The next four years – an even better service

By 2008, the NHS will offer the following:

Improved access and choice ...

- Patients will be admitted for inpatient treatment within a maximum of 18 weeks of referral by their GP, and those with urgent conditions will be treated much faster.

Faster access to surgery

Two mobile theatre treatment centres are making short work of thousands of cataract operations across the country.

The units are run by Netcare UK – a private health care organisation from South Africa. Their highly-skilled teams are helping over 44 primary care trusts offer patients speedier treatment for cataracts.

Around 44,000 cataract operations are due to be completed over the five year contract.

One patient said: "The actual procedure took an astonishing six minutes. It was tremendous to wake up the next morning enjoying sharp vision for the first time in months."



- For the first time, the 18 weeks covers the initial consultation in outpatients and any tests that need to be done. There will be no hidden waits.
- Patients will be able to choose to be treated at any hospital in England – as long as it meets NHS standards, and treatment falls within the national maximum price that the NHS pays.
- Patients will have access to a wider range of services in GP surgeries, pharmacies and other parts of primary care, including access to services nearer their workplace.

Improved quality and standards ...

- The quality of care will continue to improve, with the new Healthcare Commission providing an independent assurance of standards, and patient safety continuing to be a top priority.

More personal care ...

- More staff will work in the NHS and we will support them in working flexibly in a way that best responds to patients' needs.



Developing healthier communities

Eighty-year-old Edie Cape is helping older people stay healthy by running the innovative 'message in a bottle' scheme covering 10,000 older people in Gateshead.

"They are simply small plastic bottles containing a person's medical details," Edie explains. "They keep it in the fridge, and also put a green cross sticker on the back of their front door.

"If they do fall and can't communicate, the ambulance team can immediately see the person's medical history and which relative or carer to call."

Evidence suggests that this could save up to 15 minutes which might mean the difference between life and death.

Expert patients lead self-care

Last year, Sarah Worth from Leicester had a liver transplant operation – and changed her life.

Following the operation, she took part in an Expert Patients Programme (EPP) course which helped her realise how much people can do to manage their condition. It also gave her back the belief that she could be in control of her life.

She says: “When I was having a good day I’d try and do everything and then I was poorly for the next week.

“Now I am in control – I’m even running three to four miles, five times a week, and doing the Great North Run.”

Sarah is now a trainer for the programme.



Better care for people with long-term illnesses ...

- People with complex long-term illnesses will be supported locally by a new type of specialist – there will be 3,000 new community matrons.
- Major investment in services closer to home will ensure much better support for patients with long-term illnesses.

Help to live healthier lives ...

- The NHS will help make it easier to make healthier life choices, including by helping people give up smoking and take more exercise.
- There will be further progress in tackling the biggest killer diseases so that, by 2010, there will be a 40% fall in death rates from heart disease and stroke, and 20% fall in death rates from cancer.

More power in your hands ...

- Local communities will have greater influence and say over how their local services are run.



Medical secretaries free up consultants' time

One simple change means that Calderstones NHS Trust in Whalley, Lancashire has given each of its five consultants 12-15 hours more a week for their patients.

Instead of the consultants writing up notes after ward rounds, and the medical secretaries typing them up, the secretaries now go on ward rounds with the consultants, using a laptop. Consultants do a final check to ensure the notes are correct.

The secretaries like the extra responsibility and the fact that they are a more obviously part of the clinical team.

Secretary Anne Grumshaw, who works with Dr Anil Kumar, says: "It has put us on the map and shows that we too can have a direct impact on patient care."

More choice for heart surgery patients

Home and caravan site owner Stanley Reed, 72, first suspected something was wrong in December 2002.

He says: "I was getting an awful tightness in my chest and could feel a lump there."

Stanley went to see his GP who sent him for an angiogram test. In August 2003 he was told he would have to wait up to six months for heart bypass surgery. But in January 2004, Hull and East Yorkshire NHS Trust rang Stanley to ask him if he would consider going to the BUPA hospital in Hull for his treatment. He says: "Having the operation then meant I could be fit again in time for the summer holiday season. My treatment was excellent and I'm feeling fine again."

Find out more

For a copy of the *NHS Improvement Plan: Putting People at the Heart of Public Services* go to www.dh.gov.uk/publicationsandstatistics or telephone the Department of Health Publications Orderline on 08701 555 455.