

POLICY BRIEF

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

October 2024



The information within this Brief is correct at the time of approval for publication and contains relevant recent announcements made by Government and its departments and regulators.

GOVERNMENT POLICY, LEGISLATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND NEWS

Health missions

The New Labour government has set out a comprehensive health mission focusing on improving long-term public health and tackling healthcare inequalities. Key aspects include:

- **Reducing Health Inequalities:** Labour aims to halve the gap in healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in England. Specific pledges include addressing maternal mortality disparities, especially for Black and Asian women, and prioritising women's health broadly
- **Tackling Chronic and Long-Term Conditions:** Labour emphasises a patient-centred approach, with a strategy for managing multiple chronic conditions and improving coordination between the NHS, social care, and other sectors.
- **Prevention-Focused Initiatives:** They plan to integrate "opt-out" smoking cessation programs into routine care and regulate advertising for unhealthy products like junk food and energy drinks to protect young people.
- **Technological Innovation:** Labour's "Fit for the Future" fund aims to double CT and MRI scanners to catch cancer earlier, along with enhancing the NHS App for better patient care.
- **Mental Health and Child Care:** They also commit to reforming the Mental Health Act and improving children's health through programs like supervised tooth-brushing and expanding mental health services in communities.

Government's 10 year Plan for the NHS

Lord Darzi has published the [report](#) from his independent investigation of the NHS in England. In conjunction with this, Prime Minister Keir Starmer delivered a [speech](#) on the NHS at the King's Fund. He announced that the Government's ten-year plan for the NHS will be based around three shifts:

- Firstly, moving from an analogue to a digital NHS.
- Secondly, the Government will aim to prioritise the shift of care from hospitals to communities.
- Thirdly, there needs to be a heavier focus on prevention.

Summary of the Prime minister's speech:

The key priorities from the speech are:

1. **Acknowledge NHS Crisis and Need for Reform:** The NHS is in a critical state, facing severe challenges like long waiting times, avoidable deaths, and outdated facilities. Reform is needed, not just additional funding.
2. **Digital Transformation:** Shift from an analogue to a digital NHS, including full digital patient records, greater use of technology (e.g., apps, precision medicine), and enhancing healthcare access through digital solutions.

3. **Shift Care from Hospitals to Communities:** Transition more healthcare services to local communities, improve GP access, offer virtual consultations, and integrate health and social care to reduce hospital strain.
4. **Focus on Prevention over Cure:** Prioritise preventative healthcare, particularly in areas like children's mental health and dentistry. Initiatives like workplace health checks, blood pressure monitoring at dental clinics, and greater focus on early intervention.
5. **Economic and Societal Health:** Address the root causes of poor health, including social issues like poor housing and employment insecurity, and work to reduce long-term sickness to help boost economic growth.
6. **Workforce and Productivity:** Address the inefficiencies in NHS staffing, reduce reliance on expensive agency staff, and ensure that healthcare professionals can focus on treating patients rather than administrative tasks.
7. **Ten-Year Plan for Long-Term Reform:** Develop a long-term strategy to modernize the NHS, addressing underlying systemic issues and improving productivity and patient outcomes.
8. **Maintain Founding Ideals:** Reaffirm the NHS's foundational principle of being publicly funded and free at the point of use while driving reforms to make it more efficient and future-proof.
9. **Life Sciences and Innovation:** Support technological and scientific advancements, making the NHS a leader in fields like life sciences and innovative medical treatments.

[Adult social care winter letter 2024 to 2025](#)

Letter from Stephen Kinnock, Minister of State for Care, setting out the critical actions needed across the adult social care sector to protect individuals and their carers, and deliver operational resilience in winter 2024 to 2025. The principles guiding these short-term priorities are similar to those that will underpin that longer-term reform:

- a 'home first' approach that supports people to live independently for as long as possible
- a relentless focus on ensuring high-quality care
- close involvement of people receiving care and their families and carers

Close partnership working and joint planning between adult social care, the NHS and other community partners is vital to the successful delivery of these priorities.

[Get Winter Strong campaign launched](#)

The UK Health Security Agency, Department for Health and Social Care, and NHS England have announced the launch of the Get Winter Strong campaign on 7 October, to help reduce the impact of winter viruses on those most at risk, as well as ease NHS winter pressures. The campaign will urge all those who are eligible to get their flu and COVID-19 vaccinations ahead of winter and for the first time will encourage pregnant women to also get their respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and whooping cough vaccination. The campaign will run for 10 weeks and on TV and radio channels, outdoor poster sites in England and on social media.