

Budgets, Cuts and Waiting, Oh My!

Sinead O'Sullivan 16th March 2017

Recently, throughout the United Kingdom people have been panicking about the state of the NHS. Talk of budget cuts and failure has been commonly heard during the course of 2017 so far, but what are the facts?

Since January we have known that the NHS is under pressure with over 780 people waiting for more than 12 hours in A&E services. It has been reported that these are the worst figures when it comes to the four-hour target since it was set in 2004.

The four-hour target is a target for the A&E services which aims to see patients in under four hours in 95% of cases. This applies to all cases from life threatening emergencies to minor ones. However recently this 95% has not been achieved. It has been falling since 2014 and this year has hit an all-time low, hitting a reported 81.5% this January.

In February it was reported that two-thirds of hospital services in England would be cut. The money saved from this proposal would be put towards community services.

Early this month tens of thousands marched in London aiming to combat these cut backs. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn addressed the protesters stating that 'the NHS is in crisis, in crisis because of the underfunding in Social care' and that 'it is not the fault of the staff. It is the fault of a government who have made a political choice.'

In the recent unveiled Budget 2017, the chancellor told reporter Ian Pollock that over the next 3 years the government will allocate more money to social care, an extra £425 million to the NHS and, in this coming financial year only, £120 million to pay for GPs to work in A&E departments.

On the 8th March health secretary, Jeremy Hunt told NHS hospitals that they must start meeting the four-hour target again by March next year after more funding to social care. The new money should help with the problem of patients who have been treated and are fit to leave who have a delayed discharge as there's a lack of care available in the community. The social care money should help in relieving pressure by opening up 2,000 to 3,000 beds that are currently occupied by patients awaiting discharge.

Hospitals are also being expected to give better support to care homes to reduce accidents and emergencies among the elderly. As well as ambulance teams treating more patients at the scene of the accident.

Unfortunately, the money provided in the extra investment will be controlled by the Department of Health, not the NHS. This means that trusts will have to ask for the Department's support on their plans. These extra investments will not be available for use in recruiting new staff and hospitals will have to convince the officials of the merits of their plans before they can receive any money for it. Therefore, no extra money will be going towards the daily hospital requirements and so many doubt this will help the NHS hit the target or even sustain it.

So now you know the facts. Are you wondering how this will affect you?

Read the article by Paisleigh Wilson-Thomas to learn more about this subject.

Sources:

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