



# Your personal NHS guarantee

Labour's plan for real patient power

## Introduction by the Prime Minister

The NHS embodies our values of fairness and social justice with care on the basis of need, not ability to pay: a universal health service, not a third-rate safety net.

Only a decade ago, the very existence of the NHS seemed to be in doubt. Now with sustained investment and reform, the NHS is working for all the people of Britain - delivering higher quality healthcare which is far easier to access in safer and more convenient settings.

For sixty years, the National Health Service has been part and parcel of what it means to be British. Its principles - tax-funded with care provided according to clinical need - remain as valid today as in any previous generation.

In an insecure, fast-paced world people need a world-class health care system that is for them and their family. They need a guarantee not a gamble. The hard-working majority in our country simply cannot afford to opt out and go private - they want an NHS offering the highest quality personal care free at the point of need.

To prosper in the future, the NHS will have to respond to the same challenges that face healthcare systems across the developed world. Medical advances have eradicated some illnesses while opening up new possibilities in the treatment of others. Many experts predict that medicine will change more in the next 20 years than in the last 200 years. An ageing society and so-called "lifestyle diseases" are changing the nature of illness and disease and mean improved health requires a far greater focus on prevention and early intervention. Taken together these factors demand radical reform and change across the NHS if we are to meet the aspirations of the public to world-class healthcare. They require an increase in the pace of change.

In the NHS of the next decade, real power must lie in the hands of patients, not the bureaucracy, and the NHS must focus far more than it has in the past on prevention and early intervention. No longer can we sustain the approach of patients as the passive recipients of services. Increasingly patients and their families and carers must be seen as active partners in their care with enforceable guarantees, real choice and control over services.

So Labour will fight for a better NHS - for an NHS on the side of the patient, not the system. This is Labour's personal NHS guarantee to you.



**Gordon Brown**  
Prime Minister and Leader of the Labour Party

## An NHS guaranteed to all, personal to each

Sixty years ago, Labour created the NHS. Thirteen years ago we inherited an NHS in crisis and had to save it. Now we are able to plan a future for the NHS with real patient power, genuine choice and more personal services, centred on the needs of families and those who need care.

- A universal NHS, with guaranteed standards of care and treatment giving real power to patients and ending unfair postcode lotteries. The 18-week waiting time guarantee will ensure all patients are seen within maximum waiting times or have the right to access private treatment to speed up their care.
- A world leading NHS, with quality of treatment and survival rates for cancer, heart disease and strokes among the very best in the world.
- A personal NHS designed around the needs of patients, with choice of when and where you are treated, personal care plans and the right to an individual budget for those with long-term and chronic conditions.
- An NHS focused on early intervention and prevention, with the goal of keeping every family healthy - rights to routine check-ups for those over 40, plus access to screening, vaccination and far quicker diagnostics, such as the guarantee of cancer tests within one week of referral.
- An NHS with world-leading standards of safety and cleanliness, including national standards of infection control in every hospital, ensuring zero tolerance of unsafe care.
- A convenient NHS designed to suit the pressures of modern-life. For families, a right to choose a GP in your area open evenings and weekends. Care in convenient locations such as at pharmacists or on the high-street and, for many services, far more care in your own home.
- An NHS in which clinicians and staff, doctors and nurses, have real responsibility for managing care and are able to design services that respond directly to the needs of their patients.
- An NHS working in partnership with a new National Care Service to ensure free care in the home for those with the greatest care needs and a cap on the costs of residential care so that everyone's homes and savings are protected from care charges after two years in a care home.

## Your guarantee of no return to long waits and low standards

In 1997, health spending in the UK as a share of national income was the second lowest of all the major industrialised countries. The resulting symptoms were visible to all: long waits, outdated buildings, and the lowest availability of doctors in the EU. Since then, investment in the NHS has reached record levels - and Britain is now substantially ahead of the European average.

In a period of greater fiscal pressures, only Labour has the policies and the will to prevent a return to the era of long waits and low standards.

We are determined to protect frontline NHS spending and increase investment in vital areas of care. As part of our plan to ensure we protect frontline services while halving the deficit over four years, we have announced that National Insurance will rise by one penny in the pound. This will not happen until next year, once growth is firmly established. This is the fairest way to protect key frontline services. Our National Insurance changes will mean that no-one earning under £20,000, or any pensioners, will pay more. It is fairer than alternative options like VAT - which we have not increased since 1997.

In frontline NHS services we will cut red tape and bureaucracy, reduce management costs by a third and deliver efficiencies of up to £20 billion, ensuring that all of these savings are released back into rising frontline healthcare budgets and protecting frontline clinical staff.

And we will ensure the reforms are in place that mean there can be no return to long waits and low standards under Labour. At the heart of this will be new legally binding guarantees enshrined in the NHS constitution, offering guaranteed NHS treatment or the right to go private - locking in the high standards of treatment which NHS patients have rightly come to expect:

- the waiting-time guarantee will ensure that treatment begins within 18 weeks of seeing your GP, or the NHS will pay for you to go private
- the cancer guarantee will ensure that all patients see a cancer specialist within two weeks of GP referral
- the GP access guarantee will ensure everyone has the right to choose a GP in their area offering evening and weekend opening.

The Tory risk of a return to long waits, as the NHS abandons all guarantees, targets and national standards, is very real. Their plan for "do it yourself" public services in the NHS would mean no maximum waiting times, no power for GPs to demand that patients be seen within a maximum waiting period, no point at which the private sector must step in if the NHS cannot deliver your entitlements.

## Your personal NHS

Ensuring for people a more personal NHS means care being not just a universal service but also tailored to the needs of individuals and of families. Over the next decade people want their care not to be take-it-or-leave-it, but personal to their needs. Labour will achieve this by radically reforming our community and primary care services so that far more care is delivered in people's localities, particularly in their own homes.

- A new **"NHS in your Home"** service will give patients new choices to have their care outside of hospital and in their own homes.
  - Significant expansion in care available at home, including chemotherapy and dialysis services, working in partnership with new providers and with the best performing NHS organisations.
  - A guarantee for everyone who wants it to receive palliative care in their own home at the end of their lives which the party plans to deliver in partnership with Marie Curie and other voluntary sector providers. Pilots have shown that this can be delivered at the same or lower cost than existing services.
  - All women will have the right, wherever it is safe, to a home birth, with midwives expected to provide more continuity of care, as set out in the Government's recent maternity and early years strategy.
- To support more cancer patients being looked after in their own homes, all cancer patients will be offered one-to-one dedicated nursing for the duration of their care - with the majority expected to be provided through a significant expansion in the numbers of Macmillan nurses. This will mean an expansion to 1.6 million people in England, who have or have had cancer.
- More choice in primary and community care services. We will give patients the right to choose where and when they are treated for all routine, bookable services. We will extend individual budgets for those receiving treatment for a long-term or chronic condition through which their care package is purchased.
- And close to your home, patients will have the right to register with a GP anywhere they choose, including near their place of work, and to help hard-pressed, busy families, everyone will be guaranteed a choice of a GP open in the evenings and at weekends.
- We will continue to invest in new GP-run health centres, offering 8am-8pm access to primary care, seven days a week and an expanded range of services direct to patients in primary care settings.

## Your preventative NHS

The NHS must be as effective at preventing ill health as it is at treating those in need of care. Prevention and early intervention will be at the heart of our plans for a reformed healthcare system offering more for every pound we spend, significantly improving survival rates for cancer, heart disease and strokes so that we are among the very best in the world.

Rapid diagnosis and early intervention are now the most important factors in raising survival rates for cancer and heart disease to amongst the best in the world.

- The health-check guarantee will ensure that everyone between 40 and 74 will be guaranteed routine health checks on the NHS, preventing up to 10,000 heart attacks and strokes each year.
- We will extend breast cancer screening to cover everyone from 47 to 73 and make a decisive shift to the use of digital mammography which leads to more accurate diagnosis, faster screening and a lower error rates.
- We will extend the cancer guarantee to include the right to cancer tests in just one week, including results. This will contribute to saving tens of thousands of lives over the next ten years. Under our plans, GPs will be able to demand one week cancer tests whenever they suspect there may be a case of cancer. In the cases which prove to be cancer, earlier diagnosis will increase the chances of curative treatment. We have commenced plans to deliver the one-week access to diagnostic tests over a five-year period. The initial focus will be on providing the tests and results associated with lung, colorectal, breast and ovarian cancers within two weeks by 2013, with the guarantee extended to cover all cancers and reduced to just one week by 2015.

The commitment to deliver one-week cancer tests will require significant capital investment into primary care, as well a clear national target and reform of the way in which GP practices work. To make this investment we have committed over the next five years to £1 billion of new capital investment (£200 million pa) into primary and community services. This will be the first priority for future capital investment in the NHS. As we complete our once in a generation programme of hospital building, we will re-focus capital investment on primary and community services so that we rival the best healthcare systems in the world with our ability to identify disease.

We all have a responsibility to look after our own health, supported by our family and our employer. The ban on smoking in public places will be maintained. Wherever necessary, we will act to protect children's health from tobacco, alcohol

and sunbeds. As well as further tough action to reduce smoking we will ensure that all children have access to a nutritional diet, particularly through school meals.

GPs will be encouraged to keep their patients healthy through exercise and healthy eating advice. The ambitious Change 4 Life programme will support a more active, health-conscious country.

We will expand the availability of gyms and fitness centres through the NHS on prescription from GPs, and offer healthy eating advice through qualified nutritionists for those who want it. Across government policy, we will encourage people to cycle, walk or run through better planning and infrastructure.

We will help NHS patients with chronic and long-term conditions to self-manage wherever possible, offering them the skills and technology they need where this is sought by patients and expanding the numbers of specialist nurses who can offer greater support to patients, often at greater value for money.

We will pioneer better mental health care and tackle the scourge of mental illness. Over the next parliament more than 8,000 new therapists will ensure access to psychological therapy for all who need it. And we will take wider action to change our society's attitudes to mental illness and to combat stigma. As recommended by the Speaker's Conference, we take forward changes to the rules relating to the treatment of MPs affected by a mental health issue.

## Your empowered NHS

Those who work in our health service are the beating heart of our NHS. We will further empower clinicians and frontline NHS workers. We will extend the role of NHS nurses, particularly in primary care in line with the best clinical evidence internationally. There will be more specialist nurses, as we move towards a model of care in which all patients with serious long-term conditions are guaranteed dedicated specialist nursing.

Across the NHS we will extend the right for staff, particularly nurses, to request to run their own services in the not-for-profit sector. To strengthen local accountability, we will increase the membership of Foundation Trusts to over three million by the end of the next parliament. The NHS will benefit from a period of organisational stability: we will make no top-down changes to the structure of Primary Care Trusts or Strategic Health Authorities during the next parliament.

We will give greater freedom to GPs to take on care management responsibilities, designing and purchasing packages of care that best meet patient needs.

## Your National Care Service

The cornerstone of a fair future is ensuring everyone who needs care and support, whether through old age or disability, is properly looked after. We will establish a new National Care Service and forge a new settlement for our country as enduring as that which the Labour Government built after 1945. It will be a new settlement for all those who need care, for the carers who devote their time and energy for the good of others, and for families across the country. The care of both older people and disabled adults will be transformed; unfair postcode lotteries removed; more people will be looked after at home; and family homes and savings will be protected from catastrophic care costs.

To provide independence and control for everyone with a care need we will continue to expand the use of individual budgets, whilst protecting Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance for those who rely on them.

To drive up standards, we will develop a skilled and highly motivated workforce. The first stage of reform will be to create a step-change in the provision of services in the home and in our communities.

From 2011 we will protect more than 400,000 of those with the greatest needs from all charges for care in the home, and we will create a national physio support service helping people in every area of the country to regain their independence and confidence after a crisis or the first time they need care. These services are essential if we are to ensure more people are looked after in their homes and overall costs are to be controlled. They will be funded through savings and efficiencies in the health budget and in local government. During the next Parliament, the second stage of reform will centre on the development of national standards and entitlements to ensure high-quality care for all, and an end to the unfair postcode lotteries that affect too many families.

We also want to remove the fear that families will lose the family home in order to pay for care bills. So, from 2014, the National Care Service will cap the costs of residential care so that everyone's homes and savings are protected from care charges after two years. We will pay for this through our decision to freeze Inheritance Tax Thresholds until 2014-15, by supporting more people over the State Pension Age to stay in work if they so wish, and through efficiencies across the NHS and the care system.

The final stage of reform, after 2015, will be a comprehensive National Care Service, free at the point of use not just for older people, but all adults with an eligible care need whoever they are, wherever they live and whatever condition leads to them needing care. At the start of the next parliament we will establish a Commission to reach a consensus on the right way of financing this system.

The Commission will determine the options which should be open to individuals so that people can have choice and flexibility about how they pay and to ensure that the National Care Service is funded in a fair way.

The Commission will make recommendations in time for implementation of the third stage of reform after 2015, once these proposals have been put to the public at a general election.

There will be an end to the age discrimination that has too often seen older people disadvantaged in the provision of health services.

