Keeping patients at the heart of the NHS
The RCP’s four-point plan for the next government

President’s foreword

As the NHS approaches its 70th anniversary, it is reaching an important time in its history. The NHS is caring for more patients with complex needs than ever before. Despite this increase in demand, results from the latest patient satisfaction survey show that the public is still satisfied with the quality of care.¹

Our health service offers some of the highest-quality, most efficient and most accessible healthcare in the world. The UK has a long tradition of medical innovation, and continues to make groundbreaking medical discoveries that change the way we treat disease and care for patients, both in the UK and across the world. There is a lot to be proud of. This is all because of the wonderful, dedicated NHS staff, who work long hours and go above and beyond to ensure that patients receive the best care possible.

There are, however, significant challenges facing the NHS and our ability to care for the nation. Increasing workloads, staff shortages, lack of time for training, and the recent negotiations over the junior doctor contract are all concerning for the delivery of patient care, today and in the future.

The Royal College of Physicians (RCP), and our fellows and members, are fully committed to working with the next government to build on the NHS’s achievements, to working towards the vision set out in the Five Year Forward View, and to driving innovative new ways of caring for our patients. The RCP’s four-point plan outlines the profession’s key calls for the next government, to ensure that the NHS is adequately resourced so that patients have access to high-quality care.

Jane Dacre, president, RCP

The RCP calls on the next government to:

1 place patient care at the centre of Brexit negotiations
2 invest in, support and value the NHS workforce
3 deliver a new financial settlement for the NHS and social care
4 support people to live healthier lives by investing in public health.
About the RCP

The RCP plays a leading role in the delivery of high-quality patient care by setting standards of medical practice and promoting clinical excellence. We provide physicians in the UK and overseas with education, training and support throughout their careers. As an independent body representing nearly 34,000 fellows and members worldwide, we advise and work with government, the public, patients and other professions to improve health and healthcare. Our primary interest is in building a health system that delivers high-quality care for patients.

Place patient care at the centre of Brexit negotiations

The UK’s decision to leave the EU will have significant implications on a range of policy issues, in particular the NHS and the health of the nation. The next government must ensure that the nation’s health is placed at the centre of Brexit negotiations and that the UK’s withdrawal from the EU is used as an opportunity to improve the health of the UK.

The RCP calls on the next government to prioritise two areas in the Brexit negotiations:

> protect the rights of the NHS workforce to remain in the UK, and urgently develop a clear plan for staffing the NHS and social care in the long term
> maintain the UK’s position as a world leader for research and innovation.

Invest in, support and value the NHS workforce

The RCP’s members and fellows are treating more patients than ever before. This increase in patient numbers – as people live longer, with more complex conditions – is outpacing the resources that we have to care for them safely. We need a workforce that meets the needs of our ageing population.

The RCP calls on the next government to:

> increase the supply of doctors across all parts of the medical workforce
> support doctors to deliver the best care possible by investing in training, education and development of doctors throughout their careers
> promote innovative staffing models, such as physician associates (PAs) working with doctors.

Deliver a new financial settlement for the NHS and social care

As demand for health services continues to rise, NHS budget figures paint a challenging picture: increasing deficits, missed efficiency targets, short-term borrowing and suspension of capital investment. More than eight out of ten doctors believe that current health service funding is not sufficient to meet demand.

The RCP calls on the next government to create a budget that:

> meets the demand for health services and social care
> sets realistic targets for efficiency savings
> invests in the long-term sustainability of the NHS.

Support people to live healthier lives

As the needs of patients continue to increase, it has never been more important to support people to live healthier lives, reduce avoidable illness and help keep people out of hospitals for longer. Previous successful public health policies, such as the smoking ban in public places and sugary drinks levy, show the impact that interventions can have. However, there is still more that the government can do.

The RCP calls on the next government to:

> adequately resource vital public health services
> take national action on tackling the harmful impact of alcohol by introducing a minimum unit price
> introduce a clean air act that will improve the quality of the air we breathe
> tackle the obesity epidemic by implementing the Obesity Health Alliance’s manifesto asks
> tackle the harmful effects of smoking by introducing a new national tobacco control plan.

For further information and a full list of references, visit: rcplondon.ac.uk/four-point-plan
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References


