

Statement

The continuing winter pressures

January 2018

Yet again, the NHS across the UK is facing a real crisis trying to cope with the winter pressures. The volume of activity means unacceptable waits for patients, delays in treatment or discharge and in some cases, unsafe care.

As always, staff have responded superbly - working above and beyond the call of duty. But, they cannot and should not be expected to have to work in these circumstances at huge personal cost to their own health and well-being, especially when the reasons for difficulties facing hospitals and GPs surgeries across the UK are known and predictable.

Despite the fact the planning arrangements nationally and locally have generally been better than before and there has been clinical input at all levels, the problems have been worse than ever. But, the best planning in the world won't be effective if there are ultimately insufficient resources and capacity.

So while there is no simple or single solution to solve the problems facing our NHS, 'winter crises' will continue and worsen every year with increasing risks until the underlying issues are addressed.

Politicians need to face up to the fact that a long-term solution will require:

- More funding to allow hospitals and primary care services to increase capacity and maintain services
- Funding to allow for an increase in workforce training and capacity
- Appropriately integrated social care to improve patient flow
- The investment and delivery of a radical upgrade of measures to prevent ill-health and hospital admissions
- An honest debate about what kind of health and social care system people can reasonably expect and what it will cost to deliver that on a sustainable basis.

Clearly some of this is for the longer term, but in the meantime, the Academy strongly urges Governments, policy makers and health service leaders to begin planning for next winter now with a commitment to ensuring sufficient resources and with clinicians continuing to be at the heart of that work so patients and staff do not face the same situation next winter.

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