

Hunt reveals priorities for his NHS ‘mission’

14 May, 2015 | By Will Hazell, Dave West

Reappointed health secretary Jeremy Hunt has said his “biggest priority now is to transform care outside hospitals”.



Prime minister David Cameron confirmed Mr Hunt would stay in his role, which he has held since autumn 2012, as he reshuffled his Cabinet in the Conservative Party’s new majority government.

Responding to the news that he had been reappointed as health secretary, Mr Hunt said he was “humbled...not least because of the enormous responsibility for hundreds of thousands of doctors, nurses and other NHS staff who are working incredibly hard right now and under enormous pressure”.

Mr Hunt said the NHS had “started a journey” to make the NHS the “safest, most caring and highest quality healthcare system in the world” but added “there is still further to go”.

“My biggest priority now is to transform care outside hospitals – just as we have dramatically improved the quality of care inside hospitals in the last few years.”

He said to ensure older and vulnerable people were treated with “the highest standards of care” there needed to be a “step change” in services delivered by GP surgeries, community care and social care.

“That is my mission, and I know it is the mission of the whole NHS too,” he added.

The Conservative election manifesto said the party would “ensure you can see a GP and receive the hospital care you need, seven days a week by 2020, with a guarantee that everyone over 75 will get a same-day appointment if they need one”. It also pledged to implement the NHS Five Year Forward View, which proposes substantial reform of primary care.

In addition to transforming out of hospital care, LGC’s sister title Health Service Journal understands the health secretary sees increasing NHS efficiency as an early top priority.

During the election campaign the Conservatives committed to increasing annual NHS spending by £8bn in real terms by 2021, on top of 2015-16 plans, in line with requests made by national NHS leaders. However, if this increase is delivered, the service is still expected to need to make huge efficiency and productivity savings in order to meet growing demand and costs.

Mr Hunt told HSJ in the autumn that he had "always said I want to do this job for five years and I've told David Cameron [that] as well". This wish would make him health secretary until 2017. He said then that he "would be very happy if this [role] is my life's work".

Meanwhile, shortly before the election Mr Hunt said in an interview with HSJ that he planned an "accelerated and extended" better care fund, which would help social care services benefit from the funding growth promised for the NHS.

He indicated the current NHS spending planned for 2015-16 was "sufficient" and did not need to be increased.

Mr Cameron also made two new additions to the DH ministerial health team in his reshuffle on Tuesday including Alistair Burt replacing Liberal Democrat and Ben Gummer. George Freeman and Jane Ellison return as ministers, while Dan Poulter has left government.