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What Are We Waiting For?:

I share constituents concerns that patients are waiting longer than ever before for cancer diagnosis and treatment. Despite the best efforts of staff, UK cancer survival lags behind similar countries and cancer waiting times have not been met since 2015.

Improving cancer outcomes requires action across a range of policies: in research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

But right now, our health service is under immense pressure. NHS waiting lists have risen to 7.8 million – the highest ever on record – and staff shortages stand at over 125,000. The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee report into NHS backlogs finds that waiting times for cancer are “at their worst recorded level”. Meanwhile, ministers have dropped their plans for a dedicated cancer strategy.

In my view, we must build an NHS fit for the future - providing it with the staff, technology, resources, and reform it needs - to improve cancer pathways and ensure all patients get the support they need. I support a 10-year plan of reform and modernisation, harnessing technology to fight disease and transforming the way we deliver care to diagnose and treat cancers sooner. The immediate priority must be tackling waiting lists and getting patients treated faster, by increasing elective activity.

Alongside utilising spare capacity in the independent sector, I support an ambitious plan to enable the NHS to deliver an extra two million operations, scans and appointments a year, supported by an additional £1.1 billion investment to provide NHS staff overtime to work evening and weekend shifts, so procedures can be carried out. This plan comes alongside a new Fit for the Future fund; a £171 million a year investment to arm the NHS with state-of-the-art equipment and new technology to cut waiting times and speed up diagnosis and treatment. Fully funded by ending the non-dom tax status.

Taken together, the plan will ensure that 75% of all cancers are diagnosed earlier, at stages one or two, and improve survival rates by hitting all NHS cancer targets within five years, so no patient waits longer than they should.

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