

NHS crisis ‘demotivating and demoralising workforce, PM warned

News Article



Council members of the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) have written to the prime minister Theresa May outlining their fears about an NHS which is “underfunded, underdoctored and overstretched”, **warning that it is struggling to have the capacity to provide a high-quality of patient care.**

The letter, signed by RCP president Professor Jane Dacre and 49 council members, seeks to highlight the growing crises across the NHS including increasing patient need, services paralysed by the demand to transform, ‘over-full’ hospitals with too few qualified staff and rising numbers of staff making the decision to leave the NHS.

The council members of the RCP, which represents 33,000 doctors across 30 specialties, have warned the prime minister that the government must make capital investment in infrastructure to meet patient needs while also calling for the reinvigoration of social care services.

“Your 2015 manifesto stated that ‘patients, doctors

and nurses are the experts on how to improve people’s health’. As the members of the Royal College of Physicians’ Council: we agree. This is why we are compelled to speak up,” the letter read.

“We are fully committed to the NHS, which has seen extraordinary clinical advancements over recent decades, but we need urgent investment to continue to provide the quality of care people deserve.”

The letter outlines a myriad of problems currently facing NHS hospitals, saying that patients are waiting ‘on lists, on trolleys, in emergency departments and in their homes’ with ambulances queueing outside A&E departments and patients unable **to safely leave hospital due to a lack of sufficient social care provision.**

The **clinical workforce is also facing “demotivating and demoralising” circumstances**, the letter said, as clinical teams are stretched too thin to be effective. A recent RCP survey revealed that over 70% of doctors in training reported working on a rota with permanent gaps, rising to nine in 10 with nursing gaps.

The council members have made clear in the letter their desire to work with the government to create a ‘thriving, sustainable’ health service **as outlined in the NHS’s Five Year Forward View**, but cautioned that without urgent investment, the NHS will fail to live up to its current responsibilities as winter bites.

“We understand that the current financial pressures mean difficult choices,” the letter read. “We welcome the decision to increase the number of medical students, and the commitment to extra resources for the health service.

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But, front-line staff and managers across health and social care are clear: investment levels are not sufficient to meet current or future patient needs.”

“Promises of future investment will not address the very real challenges we face going into 2017: the time to invest is now.”

The RCP’s expert perspective on the problems afflicting the NHS will be of concern to the prime minister who has already made one major health announcement this week with **an extra £1bn to boost mental health provision, among other measures.**

In an emergency statement to the House of Commons yesterday, the health secretary Jeremy Hunt told MPs that although some trusts have encountered serious problems over the winter period, the NHS system as a whole is doing slightly better than this time last year.

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