



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

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Dear Colleague,

£250 million for hospital capacity upgrades this winter

Reducing NHS waiting times is one of the government's top priorities. As part of this, our ambition is to deliver rapid and sustained improvement in urgent and emergency care. I am writing to inform you of further steps we are taking in your local area to ensure there is extra capacity this winter.

We are already making good progress against our [Delivery Plan to Recover Urgent and Emergency Care Services](#) following the pandemic. We want patients to be seen more quickly in emergency departments, with the ambition to reach 76% of patients being admitted, transferred or discharged within four hours by March 2024. We also want ambulances to get to patients quicker, with the aim of improving response times for Category 2 incidents (which includes conditions such as strokes) to 30 minutes on average over 2023/24.

While it is positive that the latest A&E performance remains ahead of the same point last year, we know there is more to do as we head towards winter and the extra pressure that can bring to health and care services. As part of our recovery plan and the record funding for the NHS, I am pleased to inform you that £250 million is being provided to support urgent and emergency care capacity this winter, including funding for your area.

I am pleased to inform you that London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust is receiving £22.62 million which will be used for a new ward with 32 beds at Northwick Park Hospital.

This is one of 30 schemes across the country that will now be progressed for delivery in 2023/24. In total, the schemes will create 900 beds which includes over 60 intermediate care beds and improved space and assessment areas in A&E. It also includes the development and improvement to 4 Same Day Emergency Care services and 5 Urgent Treatment Centres.

As part of this year's operational planning process, NHS England has worked closely with local systems to identify these capital investments which will increase patient bed capacity and improve patient flow through hospitals – which we know is a key part of improving patient waiting times for these services. NHS England prioritised schemes that would deliver improvements to urgent and emergency care services this year, support their local capacity challenges; and deliver good value for money.

The additional hospital bed capacity will help support NHS England's plan to provide over 5,000 additional permanent beds for this winter alongside upgrades to ensure that patients who do not need to be admitted to hospital are seen quickly.

These are tangible improvements that are part and parcel of our approach to supporting the NHS to recovery from the impacts of the pandemic and ensure that patients receive the best possible services. This capital funding is also on top of the existing investment as part of the Delivery Plan, including:

- £1 billion of dedicated funding to support capacity in urgent and emergency services, building on the £500 million used last winter.
- £200 million for ambulance services to increase the number of ambulance hours on the road.
- An additional £1.6 billion of discharge funding over 2023/24 and 2024/25, building on the £500 million Adult Social Care Discharge Fund released in September 2022.

I hope this information is helpful as we continue to work across healthcare systems to deliver improvements for patients and drive down waiting times.

Yours sincerely,

RT HON STEVE BARCLAY MP