

NHS Winter Crisis

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

The Minister will know that pressures in the NHS cannot be viewed in isolation from pressures in the community. It is great to see that he is now part of a Department of Health and Social Care. Will he say what is being done about making beds available in the community, to free up pressures in the NHS?

Stephen Barclay Minister of State (Department of Health and Social Care)

My hon. Friend, the Chair of the Health Select Committee, makes a valid point about the need for much more integration in our approach to the NHS. That is reflected in the appointment of my hon. Friend Caroline Dinenage as the Minister for Care, to look at that exact point.

Part of it is also looking at how we address other areas to deliver better outcomes. For example, 43% of bed occupancy at present is from just 5% of patients—those staying over 21 days. One key issue is how we bring down the current average stay from 40 days to, say, 35 days. That alone would unlock around 5,000 beds. We are looking at a more integrated model to address the pathways that I know my hon. Friend has highlighted in the Health Committee as a key priority.

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