



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dear Constituent

Thank you for contacting me about the pressures facing the NHS this winter.

Winter is always a difficult time of year for health services across the world, and this year is no exception.

The Government has worked closely with the NHS to prepare for winter. Winter preparations began earlier than ever before: in the Spring Budget last year, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, I pledged £100 million investment to help A&E departments throughout the country prepare; and in December, the Government invested a further £337 million to support the NHS throughout the winter. This money has, amongst other achievements, helped the NHS open over 1,000 more acute hospital beds since the end of November, and install GP streaming services in 91 per cent of A&E departments.

Despite very challenging circumstances, these preparations have been of great help to the health service, whose staff have offered lifesaving, compassionate care at the hardest time of the year. Indeed, Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, NHS England's National Medical Director, has said that this winter has seen some of the best, and most thorough, preparations on record.

It is incredibly unfortunate that NHS England has had to postpone non-urgent operations this January. This emergency action was taken by the NHS National Emergency Pressures Panel, following sustained pressure on the NHS over Christmas and in light of the 'flu outbreak. It is right that clinical priority is always the guiding consideration in prioritising NHS care when resources come under pressure. No urgent, or cancer-related, operations have been deferred and the Government believes the panel was right to decide to order a pre-emptive postponement programme, rather than risk having to cancel operations with only a few hours' notice.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Philip Hammond'.

PHILIP HAMMOND