



4 July 2008

NHS@60

An open letter from Peter Soulsby MP

One of the central convictions that took me into politics was to fight for the NHS. I believe it is one of our country's greatest achievements. A health service that is available to all based on need - not ability to pay.

This year marks its sixtieth anniversary – something we can all celebrate. From being on its knees in the mid 90s the NHS is now in better shape with more staff and record investment. However, as an MP but also as an NHS patient as well, I know that the work to make the service even better should never stop. That's why I am proud of this Government's record investment in the NHS, but why also, I will always demand more.

There are more nurses and more doctors and the NHS is now performing more than one million extra operations a year, with virtually no-one now waiting more than 6 months for their operation, compared with waits of up to 2 years ten years ago.

Statistics only tell us so much. It's the real life stories that tell us most about how valuable the NHS is. Whenever I speak to my constituents about the NHS their stories are always ones of excellent, hard working, dedicated NHS staff; not just the doctors and nurses, but also the receptionists, hospital porters and other members of the NHS team.

Sixty years since we founded it, Labour is improving the NHS. Our mission is to make the NHS a more personal health service, fitted to the needs of families and focused on preventing ill health as well as curing it.

A lot of change has occurred over the last sixty years. And this means that there are new challenges for our NHS. New drugs, medical technologies and better clinical practices provide us with huge opportunities, whilst diseases like obesity and diabetes as well as an ageing population in Leicester present big challenges.

We need an NHS which is fit for modern life. We as patients should be given greater control, greater choice and a strong voice in our local services. It's no good having a great GP if you can't go there after work; that's why I am supporting moves to get more GPs opening for longer and hours that better suit working people.

By 2009 the majority of GP surgeries will be open for at least one evening or weekend session every week. Leicester will be getting a new £6 million state of the art centre to help tackle and treat diabetes in our city. New GP centres will be opening across the city including in the Crown Hills area.

We can see the results of the Government's record investment in the NHS across our city. In my constituency, the new St Peter's Health Centre is providing an excellent service to the local community. The newly opened Urgent Care centre at the Royal Infirmary is a great example of how the health service is changing to meet needs. Glenfield Hospital leads the way in treating lung cancer and respiratory conditions.

So sixty years on, we still have free access to high-quality healthcare and people feel safe in the knowledge that if they or their family need the NHS, it is there for them.

We should also take time to say thank you to the excellent staff working in the NHS. I meet NHS staff regularly and know that they always go the extra mile. Their commitment to the NHS and its values should be commended.

As your MP I can give you this guarantee. I will always fight to improve the NHS in Leicester and work to ensure that it meets the needs of local people.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter" followed by a horizontal line underneath.

Peter Soulsby
Member of Parliament for Leicester South