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HAMPSHIRE CHRONICLE

Letter from Westminster



Winchester MP: Steve Brine

AS A health minister in the current Government, I am familiar with calls for extra public spending.

The NHS, as it celebrates its 70th, doesn't need a birthday card and it certainly doesn't need us to restore funding to the levels it used to

"enjoy" pre-2010 because that would mean LESS money for the service. What it needs is investment.

I am proud of the part I've been able to play in securing a new five-year budget settlement for the NHS. This means that in cash terms the budget will have increased by over one quarter in five years' time, with an extra £600m a week (not just £350m) by the end of the period. Year on year since 2010 the NHS budget has increased meaning every part of our country and our health service will feel the benefit as we move closer to safe, high quality healthcare for all.

Alongside the day job, my work now turns to producing a new long-term plan for the NHS that has prevention at its core. That is around public health interventions, immunisation, integrated primary care and it goes hand-in-hand with an updated Cancer Strategy for England where I am determined our ambition will match our spending. There is great experience as well as knowledge among my constituents so would welcome contributions. You have an experienced constituency MP working at the heart of Government so do get in touch.

Health may be the public's number one spending priority but, as we move towards the Spending Review next year, my attention is also turning to education. It came up a few times last week as I began my 2018 Summer Tour and rightly so.

I am acutely aware of funding pressures in schools (and pre-schools) and constituents will remember I made this a centre-piece of my communication at last year's General Election. Indeed I have argued within Government for some time for increased school funding - a bigger overall funding envelope - and that happened as a result of the election because of a promise we inserted into the Conservative manifesto.

Obviously I welcome the government's commitment via the National Funding Formula to a fairer system for allocating school funding, and the extra £1.3 billion made available for schools between 2018-20 but, as I have said many times, the fact is Hampshire remains one of the lowest funded local education authorities in England when compared to other areas. As an example, Tower Hamlets receives £5,893 per-pupil block funding whereas Hampshire gets £3,763 so I will go on arguing for that to be addressed and remain closer to the £40 campaign.

Any Chancellor faces very tough choices at a Spending Review (and I don't ever get emails from constituents suggesting ways we can spend less money) so I think education needs to make a sensible and well-reasoned case, starting now. It worked in health.

See full details of my Summer Tour at www.stevebrine.com/summertour2018.

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