# NHS: IS THE EXTRA MONEY WORKING?

## INTRODUCTION

After decades of under investment in the UK's health system, the Government's 10-year NHS Plan of July 2000, acknowledged that the NHS 'has been left with insufficient capacity to provide the services the public expect', and pledged sustained amounts of extra cash for the NHS.[1] This extra money is accompanied by structural and practice reforms as well as various targets on increased staffing and technological resources, A&E experiences, waiting lists and waiting times and so on.[2] Subsequently, an array of Government reports has been published explicitly detailing progress in achieving those aims and targets (these include the NHS Modernisation Agency's '*The NHS Plan – A Progress Report*', the Department of Health's *Delivering the NHS Plan – Expenditure Report*, and *Departmental Report 2002*, the Audit Commission's '*Achieving the NHS Plan*', and Health Bulletin '*Waiting List Accuracy'*, the Commission for Health Improvement's *Getting Better? A report on the NHS*, the NHS's *Chief Executive's Report to the NHS 2002/03*, and the Office of National Statistics' '*Understanding Government Output and Productivity'*).

Some of this material suggests that progress is being made, but there is also concern among healthcare professionals and patients groups, not to mention many in the Government, that much of the increased expenditure is having little impact on patient experiences.[3] At a time when our political parties are gearing up for the next general election, this briefing is designed to provide readers with an objective sift through recently published material; it looks at what was promised in the National Plan and National Service Frameworks, and asks a number of important questions:

- How much more is being spent on health care?
- Has the level of healthcare supply increased and has quality of care improved?
- Are the extra billions money reaching the 'front line' – GPs and specialists?
- And are valuable resources being used 'smarter'?

The figures considered in this study are from a wide range of sources, which indicate increases in expenditure, changes in activity rates, as well as technological resource and staffing levels.[4] Some changes in health outcomes are also included, though it is difficult to attribute these to increased expenditure on health and subsequent improvements in supply; new diagnostic procedures and treatments, and preventive activities must also be taken into account.

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[1] NHS Plan, 2000. (p31)
[2] NHS Plan, 2000.
[3] On 7 January 2003, the Financial Times reported concerns in the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. A leaked report by the Michael Barber, Head of the Delivery Unit, suggested the government was likely to miss many of its targets and may not achieve value for money.
[4] The data presented is taken from published sources and therefore might not quite reflect the current situation. The material will be updated as further evidence comes available.