New coalition government warns of spending cuts to NHS

Efficiency savings and pay squeezes in areas of healthcare herald new age of British Government

The new coalition government has warned that the NHS will be hit by efficiency savings and pay squeezes.

The new Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley (Conservative, pictured), told the BBC’s Today Programme that the service would not be saved from the same kind of efficiency savings and pay squeezes that will hit right across the public sector in a bid to claw back cash.

Mr Lansley is the MP for South Cambridgeshire and previously served as the Shadow Health Secretary – a position he held from 2005.

On being appointed, he said: “It is an immense privilege to be appointed Secretary of State for Health in the new Government.

“Just as Britain needs strong and stable Government, so we intend to bring to the NHS the consistent, stable reform, which enables it to deliver improving quality of care to patients.

“I am determined that we will have an NHS in which the patient shares in making decisions; where quality standards are evidence-based and form the basis of the design of services and their management; and where the objective is consistent improvement in the outcomes we achieve, so that they are amongst the best in the world.”

However he added: “To achieve this in the current financial crisis requires leadership and highly effective management. The NHS will be backed with increased core resources but with this comes a real responsibility. We will need progressively to be more efficient, to cut the costs of what we do now, to innovate and re-design, in order to ensure we meet increased demands and to improve quality and outcomes.”

As Shadow Health Secretary, Mr Lansley attacked the “terrible dental legacy” of Labour and warned that it would be “difficult to fix”.

Before the election, the Conservatives promised to tie taxpay- er-trained dentists into the NHS for five years, and allow dentists to fine people who consistently miss appointments and give every five-year-old a dental check-up.

“It costs the NHS around £170,000 to train a dentist, but many feel forced to abandon the service for the private sector – or in some cases are actually being poached – at no cost to private firms. We propose that those who take public bursaries for dental training should do at least five years work for the NHS in return,” said their manifesto.

The Tories also pledged to reduce the frequency of routine check-ups NHS dentists would also be rewarded for preventative work.

The other part of the coalition government, the Liberal Democrats, didn’t even mention NHS dentistry in its election manifesto.

When Dental Tribune went to press, the Department of Health had just announced the appointments to the Government’s ministerial health team. Paul Burstow, Liberal Democrat MP for Sutton and Cheam and Simon Burns, Conservative MP for west Chelmsford, have both been selected to serve as ministers of state for health in the new coalition Government.

Former nurse, MP Anne Milton (Conservative) and Earl Howe, an elected hereditary peer have both been made parliamentary under secretaries of state.

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