

will be used to cut waiting times for operations to 18 weeks by 2008

in the arm

By Lily Canter
Health Reporter

ton we have been playing catch up with the rest of the country and it is nice to finally be in a position where we are getting the largest slice of the pie.

"It is a huge increase and it puts us in the premier division in terms of health care. Our hospitals and GP services can continue to grow and the service will continue to improve."

Andrew Riley, Chief Executive of Northampton General Hospital, said he was pleasantly surprised by the amount of funding allocated.

He added: "Whether patients get treated in hospital or in the local community it is very good news. I am pleased that there has been some movement at last."

lily.canter@northantsnews.co.uk



Money will ease deficits

POLITICIANS and health chiefs in Northamptonshire have welcomed news that the Government is to provide the NHS with a multi-million pound cash boost aimed at improving services for.

More than £1,400 million has been allocated to the three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in the county, to be spent on local hospitals, surgeries and community health care from 2006 to 2008.

Tony Clarke, Labour MP for Northampton South, who has lobbied for the past eight years for a substantial cash injection, said: "It is a move at last to give us better funding rather than leaving us lagging behind."

Simon Crick, finance director of Daventry and South Northants PCT, who said the additional £24million received by the trust would allow them to improve services in the community, added: "We are still working out the details but we are very pleased with the level

of increase that we have got."

But Tim Boswell, Conservative MP for Daventry, said: "It is encouraging but all these figures have to be very carefully checked. There may be savings elsewhere. We have been squeezed over the years and now we are getting a little bit of compensation, but this is not a bonanza."

The announcement of additional funding follows a cash crisis amongst PCTs in Northamptonshire, which are struggling to make ends meet at the end of the financial year.

Lord Warner said that the cash could help PCTs break the cycle of spiralling debts.

"PCTs will have to deal with their cash flow problems this year but their deficits should not be getting worse and worse in the future as has happened in the past," he said.

An extra £500 a year for everyone

HEALTH minister Lord Warner said people in Northampton would be receiving the equivalent of an extra £500 a year through the new NHS budget.

Figures released yesterday revealed that funding for Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in Northamptonshire is set to increase between 10 and 15 per cent over the next two financial years.

Lord Warner told the *Chronicle & Echo* yesterday it was important to let the public know what the funding increase actually meant.

He added: "The most interesting thing is to show what these figures mean for each man, woman and child living in the PCT area. Where people are sceptical about whether more money is going into health care this gives an indication of how it is being spent. It is an attempt to show what this means to the individual."

The Government hopes the increase will be used by PCTs to help tackle killer diseases such as heart disease, stroke and cancer.

The NHS is currently on track to secure by 2010 a 40per cent

fall from 1997 in death rates from heart disease and stroke, and a 20 per cent fall in death rates from cancer.

Lord Warner explained that the extra cash could also be used to recruit additional staff in key areas such as midwifery and radiology as well as slashing waiting lists times.

He added: "The guarantee we are offering is that by the time we get to the end of 2008 no one will be waiting more than 18 weeks for patient treatment. It is a dramatic change from where we were and at the moment we are reaching between six and nine months."

The predicted growth of Northamptonshire under the Milton Keynes South Midlands development has also been taken into consideration alongside the 2001 population consensus.

Lord Warner explained that where areas were growing faster this had been reflected in their funding allocations.

"We have tried to incorporate some of the growth that is forecast over the next two years to attempt to make the allocation system as up to date as possible," he said.

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