

NHS facing a 'deepening financial crisis' says Head of Health Policy at the BMA

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Head of the Health Policy and Economic Research Unit at the British Medical Association, Jon Ford, is warning that the NHS is facing a deep financial crisis and by April 2016 the service will have to "make do with only three quarters of the budget it actually needs."

Chancellor George Osborne has announced an increase in health spending of 1.9% for 2015/16, but taking inflation into account the true figure will be just 0.1%. And although politicians are promising to protect and increase the health budget every year, the latest Comprehensive Spending Review shows that the reality to be quite different.

According to Ford, the NHS will have had to find £20 billion in [efficiency savings](#) by then and build even more savings on top. With demand for services rising by 4% per year, the NHS will have to generate further savings of £4.25bn to meet the pressures arising from an increasingly older population and technological change, resulting in a total of £24.25bn savings by 2016 – or a quarter of its total budget.

Ford says most of the £5.8bn efficiencies made in 2011/12 came from pay freezes and one-off cuts and it is "totally unrealistic" to think that a quarter of the budget can be saved in this way. He believes the scale of savings would require "pay and staffing levels to be decimated" making the service "unviable".

He draws on a recent BMA survey which showed that around two third

of doctors want to make changes but due to lack of time, capacity or support are unable to do so and "feel frustrated and disempowered".

He says the "NHS is facing a deepening crisis [and] the recent comprehensive spending review must serve as a wake-up call".

More information: www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.f4422

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