

Health Secretary promises to end cull of community hospitals so more patients can undergo minor procedures such as scans and X-rays closer to their homes

- Health Secretary Matt Hancock said more patients should be cared for locally
- Community hospitals are facing cuts across Britain as departments are moved
- It comes after Mr Hancock revealed he is dyslexic and relies on spellchecks

Published: 23:28, 2 October 2018 | Updated: 01:25, 3 October 2018



The Health Secretary has promised to end the closure of community hospitals to ensure patients can be treated near their homes.

Matt Hancock said it was time to end the era of moving medical departments to large regional hospitals while smaller ones were closed.

He wants more patients to be cared for locally, particularly for routine procedures such as scans, physiotherapy and treatment for minor injuries.

Set up 150 years ago as cottage hospitals with just a few beds, Britain now has around 500 community hospitals that provide a broad range of services for local patients, including end-of-life care, rehabilitation for the elderly, scans, X-rays and minor injury units.

But NHS cuts mean dozens are facing closure across the country, including in Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Cumbria, Leicestershire, Devon and Dorset.

Local health officials have been told to make savings and improve care, and many argue that patients can be treated more safely and cheaply in larger hospitals, even if they have further to travel.

But Mr Hancock believes that although patients should be prepared to go further afield for major operations such as heart bypass surgery, other procedures should be offered closer to home.



Mr Hancock wants more patients to be cared for locally, particularly for routine procedures such as scans and treatment for minor injuries

He has successfully fought against the closure of his local community hospital in Newmarket, Suffolk, which specialises in rehabilitation and long-term care for the elderly.

In his speech at the Tory conference yesterday, he said: 'We've got to reform the system so we spend more time on prevention not cure, with more integration between health and social care, and more treatment closer to home.'

'WHAT I MEAN BY THIS IS THAT THE ERA OF MOVING ALL ACTIVITY INTO FEWER, LARGER HOSPITALS AND BLINDLY, INVARIABLE CLOSING COMMUNITY HOSPITALS IS OVER.'

'I want more services closer to the communities they serve.' 'And I want us to empower patients to have more control over their own health.'