Sarah Wollaston Conservative, Totnes  

I welcome the Secretary of State’s vision of an NHS that is empowered to focus more fully on the people and communities it serves and that is more transparent, less bureaucratic and as safe on a Sunday as it is on a Wednesday, and I welcome his comments about culture change. Does he agree that meeting that challenge will also depend on financing? As welcome as the extra £8 billion announced in the Budget is, will he join me in urging colleagues to ensure that as much of that as possible is front-loaded, because it is so necessary for the transformational changes he has talked about? In encouraging leadership across the NHS, will he ensure that the changes that are needed at a local level, and the systems we can integrate for the benefit of patients, can be introduced more quickly and effectively?

Jeremy Hunt The Secretary of State for Health

I thank my hon. Friend for her important comments, and for sitting through a very long speech I gave this morning. We are trying to achieve many things. At their heart, as she rightly says, is a recognition that culture change does not happen overnight. She is right that the profiling of the extra money that the Government are investing in the NHS is important, because we need to spend money soon on some things, such as additional capacity in primary care, as in two to three years’ time that will significantly reduce the need for expensive hospital care. We are going through those numbers carefully. She is also right that local leadership really matters. I know that she will agree, especially as she comes from Devon, that leadership needs to be good at a CCG level as well as a trust level, because CCGs have a really important role in commissioning healthcare in local communities. That is an area where we need to make a lot of improvements.