GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Health Minister Outlines Reforms to Strengthen Healthcare System

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The Government of the Virgin Islands is advancing a comprehensive programme of healthcare reform aimed at improving patient care, strengthening accountability and ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the Territory's health system.

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, outlined the Government's priorities in a statement to the House of Assembly, emphasising that the reforms are designed to address rising healthcare costs, an ageing population and the increasing burden of chronic diseases.

“Every resident of the Virgin Islands deserves access to safe, high-quality, affordable, and sustainable healthcare, both today and for future generations,” Honourable Wheatley stated.

The reform programme focuses on five key priorities: sustainable healthcare financing, strengthening the National Health Insurance (NHI) programme, improving governance and accountability, modernising health information systems and developing more integrated models of care.

A major component involves the proposed transition of the BVI Health Services Authority (BVIHSA) from its current global budget arrangement to a more flexible funding model linked to the services it provides. The change is intended to improve financial sustainability, support service expansion and strengthen the Authority's ability to meet the Territory's healthcare needs.

Efforts are also underway to strengthen NHI through improved governance, financial oversight and closer coordination with BVIHSA. An Alliance Agreement being developed between the two institutions will establish a clearer framework for joint planning, service delivery, information sharing and accountability.

Honourable Wheatley emphasised that NHI and BVIHSA serve complementary roles within the Territory's healthcare system and must work together to improve health outcomes.

The Ministry is also working with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and local partners to modernise health information systems, improve disease surveillance and strengthen the use of

reliable health data in decision-making.

This work includes improving secure information sharing among healthcare providers and developing population-based health registries, including a national cancer registry.

In addition, the Government is advancing a comprehensive cancer strategy focused on prevention, early detection, improved local services and partnerships for specialised treatment. Work is also progressing on cervical cancer elimination and improved management of hypertension and diabetes through primary healthcare.

The Minister said the reforms are intended to create a more coordinated, patient-centred system that provides appropriate care from prevention and screening through treatment, rehabilitation and long-term follow-up.

“These initiatives are not isolated projects. They are part of one integrated programme of reform designed to improve health outcomes, strengthen public confidence, and ensure the long-term sustainability of healthcare in The Virgin Islands,” Honourable Wheatley stated.

The Ministry will continue working with healthcare professionals, statutory bodies, regional and international partners and the wider community to advance these priorities.

“Our objective is not simply to spend more on healthcare. It is to ensure that every investment in healthcare delivers better health outcomes, better value for money, and a stronger, more sustainable health system for everyone who lives in The Virgin Islands,” the Minister affirmed.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development remains committed to protecting and promoting the health and social well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands through effective policies, sustainable programmes, and strategic partnerships that support a safe, healthy, and resilient society.

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