



Department of Health & Social Care

From the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Rt. Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

06 June 2022

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your letter of 19 May. The Department welcomes the Health and Social Care Committee's findings on the important issues raised in the *Clearing the Backlog Caused by the Pandemic* report.

In your letter, you note the delay in our response and your understanding of the pressures faced by the Department, while acknowledging the Department's communication and sharing of an embargoed copy. I would like to apologise for the delay in publishing the response and assure you that clearing the backlog is a priority for me and the Department.

I would like to thank you and the Health and Social Care Committee for your work in examining a range of important issues in your inquiries. I recognise that the Department's responses to inquiries are an important part of its accountability to Parliament. The Department takes this commitment seriously and endeavours to provide a full response to the recommendations made in each report.

With regard to our response to the *Clearing the Backlog Caused by the Pandemic* report, plans on the wider patient choice offer, and how these plans will be communicated to the public are still being developed. We will communicate with the public and the Committee when these plans have been finalised. As for long-waiting patients who will not be taking up the choice offer (either because they have declined to change provider, or have particularly complex medical needs), the NHS will be contacting these patients directly by letter in the upcoming months to reassure them that they will still be treated as soon as possible and that the opportunity to change provider is still available to them (if applicable).

In addition, we have made provision to use My Planned Care as a patient facing platform to inform patients on the changes to choice policy once this has been agreed. There will be a section within My Planned Care dedicated to patients' right to choose.

The development of the 2022/23 Long COVID Plan by NHS England is well advanced and we expect its publication this summer. We will update the Committee when we have more information on timing.

You are right in your assertion that the Health and Care Act received Royal Assent before the response was submitted to the Committee. The naming of the Act in our response was an oversight by the Department.

The Department understands the importance of clearly setting out our response to recommendations. Where it is possible, we will provide a clear answer but, in some instances, it will be necessary to write to the Committee with updates as policies develop. We will be clear when that is the case.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid', is centered on the page.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP