



Health and Social Care Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 6182 Fax 020 7219 5171 Email: hsccom@parliament.uk

Website: www.parliament.uk/hsccom Twitter: [@CommonsHealth](https://twitter.com/CommonsHealth)

From Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP

21 October 2020

Prerana Issar
Chief People Officer, NHS

Letter by Email

Dear Prerana

Thank you for taking the time to appear before the Health and Social Care Committee on 20 October, with Claire Murdoch, and for providing a series of useful updates to the Committee.

During the session, we spoke at some length about workforce projections. You updated the Committee on the work that has been done by NHS England and Improvement, together with Health Education England, to model the numbers of professionals needed to deliver the Long Term Plan. You also kindly agreed to write to the Committee with details on that modelling.

Last year, when [Baroness Harding addressed the previous Committee](#) on her workforce review, she said that the 'definitive numbers that would stand scrutiny in a public forum' had not yet been produced. She explained that while there would be a time at which those needed to be made public, it was 'not yet.' I would be grateful if you would confirm that those numbers will be published after the spending review and that they will be your independent forecasts of the workforce numbers needed over the next 10 years, broken down by specialty and skillset.

Since your appearance we have also heard that there will only be a one year spending review in this financial year because of the pandemic. We understand the reasons the government might choose to do that, but I would be grateful if you would confirm that this will not delay the publication of your 10 year workforce projections.

In its [recent report on the nursing workforce](#), the Public Accounts Committee called for publication of a substantive long-term workforce plan 'as soon as possible.' As that Committee [points out](#), if detailed workforce plans are published after the Spending Review it will be 'nearly two years' between the publication of the Long Term Plan in 2019 and the full workforce plan intended to support it. The reason it is important to publish the workforce requirements this year is because there is already a significant time lag caused by the 7 years it takes to train a doctor and 3 years to train a nurse. A delay until next year would mean we would not be able to train any new doctors to take up their posts within the period of the NHS 10 year plan which was published in 2019. I am sure you appreciate that would make a mockery of the original intention to have a 10 year workforce plan to sit alongside the NHS 10 year plan.

I am sure you will appreciate the sense of urgency that follows from this, not least because our inquiry into NHS and care staff burnout will focus hard on whether the NHS is addressing the long term shortages of frontline staff that are one of the root causes of what Professor Michael West described as chronic excessive workload. It is therefore extremely important for my Committee to have these figures so that we can make informed decisions and recommendations.

I would therefore be grateful if you could set out the date by which my Committee will be able to scrutinise the modelling and the number of professionals NHS England and Improvement estimate will be required to deliver the 10 year Long Term Plan.

We of course understand that staff numbers are only part of the complex picture necessary to reduce stress and burnout, and much excellent work is being done by NHS England on mental health support for staff amongst other measures to create a positive and supportive work environment. These will of course also be reflected in our report.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy', with a stylized 'J' and 'H'.

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee