



Health and Social Care Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 6182 Fax 020 7219 5171 Email: hscocom@parliament.uk Website: www.parliament.uk/hscocom Twitter: [@CommonsHealth](https://twitter.com/CommonsHealth)

From Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP

26 November 2020

Rt Hon Matt Hancock
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Sir Simon Stevens
Chief Executive, NHS England and Improvement

Prerana Issar
Chief People Officer, NHS

Letter sent by email

Dear Matt, Sir Simon and Prerana,

Thank you for your letters of 13 and 16 November 2020¹ in response to my follow-up letter relating to the recommendations in the Committee's *Delivering core NHS and care services during the pandemic and beyond* report which had deadlines of the end of October 2020 or earlier,² and my letter of 21 October 2020 relating to NHS workforce projections.³

The responses to the recommendations set out in the Committee's *Delivering core NHS and care services* report were helpful in clarifying what work is currently taking place to support patients and the NHS. In particular, I am pleased to hear about the on-going work that the Department and NHSE/I are doing to test asymptomatic patient-facing NHS staff and secure further resources from the independent sector to support NHS capacity. The Chief People Officer's letter also helpfully provides a definition of "workforce burnout" that is guiding NHSE/I's work. However, I am disappointed that several key recommendations have been either ignored or inadequately answered. These recommendations relate to: **waiting times and managing the backlog of appointments; NHS and care workforce wellbeing during the pandemic; and support for BAME NHS staff members.** In addition to this, does not address many of the points I raised in my original letter relating to NHS workforce projections.

¹ [Letter](#) and [attachment](#) from Prerana Issar (Chief People Officer, NHSE/I) to Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP (Chair, Health & Social Care Committee), 13 November 2020; and [Joint letter](#) from Rt Hon Matt Hancock (Secretary of State for Health & Social Care) and Sir Simon Stevens (Chief Executive, NHSE/I) to Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP (Chair, Health & Social Care Committee), 16 November 2020.

² [Letter](#) from Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP (Chair, Health & Social Care Committee) to Rt Hon Matt Hancock (Secretary of State for Health & Social Care) and Sir Simon Stevens (Chief Executive, NHSE/I), 12 November 2020

³ [Letter](#) from Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP (Chair, Health & Social Care Committee) to Prerana Issar (Chief People Officer, NHSE/I) on NHS workforce, 21 October 2020

1. Waiting times and managing the backlog of appointments

Although the joint response provides information on what progress is being made to restore cancer services and the levels of NHS productivity more generally, the joint response does not address the following parts of the recommendation:

- What assessment the Department and NHSE/I have taken to **quantify** the overall impact of the pandemic on waiting times, the backlog of appointments and as of yet unmet demand; and
- What specific steps the Department and NHSE/I are taking to restore **mental health services, dentistry services, GP services and elective surgery**.⁴

The Committee welcomes the funding announcements for the NHS made as part of the Spending Review. However, without the backlog of appointments and pent-up demand for NHS medical being clearly quantified, it remains unclear to what extent, if at all, this additional financial investment will be sufficient in supporting the resumption of non-COVID services. I reiterate the Committee's recommendation and ask for this information, particularly as it will be central to the Committee's future work in ensuring that patients, NHS staff and the NHS are properly supported in the face of the significant disruption which has been caused by the pandemic.

2. NHS and care workforce wellbeing during the pandemic

The Chief People Officer's response to the recommendation relating to NHS wellbeing during the pandemic is unsatisfactory. The response primarily refers to the 'Our NHS People' health and wellbeing support offer which was launched on **8 April 2020**. The Committee's report was published on **1 October 2020** and had considered this and other initiatives which had already been announced by NHSE/I. The Committee welcomes the Chief People Officer's confirmation that a further investment of £30m will be used to support staff but it still remains unclear how this money will be spent and why. It is frustrating that, in response to the Committee asking for information on what "**further specific steps**" NHSE/I "would like to take **over the coming years** to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all NHS staff",⁵ the Chief People Officer's has provided limited and vague information.

Furthermore, the Committee's recommendation had asked for this information in order to help it "clarify what NHSE/I's priorities for NHS staff are, and to judge how far the Government's eventual spending commitments enable their implementation".⁶ It is regrettable that the Committee did not receive this information at the appropriate time.

I would be grateful if further full and substantial information can be provided on:

- What **specific steps** are NHSE/I taking and planning to take **over the next five years** to support the mental and physical wellbeing of all NHS staff and in particular what specific steps are being taken to address issue of sustained workplace pressure due to the current pandemic and backlog associated with the coronavirus;
- How and when the further investment of £30m will be spent (i.e. on what specific measures and initiatives), and clarification on what assessment has been made of how this money will be spent.

⁴ Health & Social Care Committee, [Delivering core NHS and care services during the pandemic and beyond \[report\]](#), paragraph 65, 1 October 2020, HC 320

⁵ Health & Social Care Committee, [Delivering core NHS and care services during the pandemic and beyond \[report\]](#), paragraph 139, 1 October 2020, HC 320

⁶ *Ibid.*

This information will be key to the Committee's on-going *workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care* inquiry.⁷

3. Support for BAME NHS staff members

The Chief People Officer's response helpfully sets out what initiatives are in place to tackle discrimination and promote diversity in the NHS. It is concerning, however, that the As part of its recommendation on supporting BAME NHS staff members, the Committee asked "NHSE/I provide a full and comprehensive definition of the "racism and discrimination" that it seeks to eradicate from the NHS."⁸ It is deeply concerning that the Chief People Officer's response fails to offer such a definition, particularly as the Committee states in its report that "expects full and constructive engagement with NHSE/I and the Department" as it seeks to further investigate the support on offer to BAME NHS staff.⁹ Without such a definition, it is unclear what types of discrimination may be prevalent in the NHS, how NHSE/I is seeking to address such issues and whether NHSE/I's efforts have been effective.

I would like to reiterate the Committee's recommendation and **ask for NHSE/I to provide a full and comprehensive definition of the "racism and discrimination" that it seeks to eradicate from the NHS.** This information could be assessed as part of the Committee's on-going inquiries into *Coronavirus: lessons learnt*¹⁰ and *Workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care*¹¹ with future sessions dedicated to addressing policy matters from the perspective of BAME NHS staff members.

I would be grateful if substantive responses to the recommendations which have not be adequately addressed, as set out above, are provided to the Committee as part of the Department and NHSE/I's wider response to the report. The Committee expects to receive this wider response by the start of December 2020 in accordance with the normal two-month timeframe.

4. Prerana Issar: NHS Workforce

Prerana – following your oral evidence to the Committee's session on *Workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care* on 20 October 2020,¹² I wrote to you to set out the urgency with which 10 year workforce projections for the NHS are required.¹³

We know that the seven years of training required for new doctors necessitates a significant time lag between implementation of policy and deployment of staff. If detailed workforce plans are further delayed, we risk a situation whereby no additional doctors will have completed their training within the lifespan of the NHS 10 year plan. As I wrote in October, this would make a mockery of the original intention to have a 10 year workforce plan to sit alongside the NHS 10 year plan.

⁷ Health & Social Care Committee, [Workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care](#), inquiry, HC 703

⁸ Health & Social Care Committee, [Delivering core NHS and care services during the pandemic and beyond \[report\]](#), paragraph 154, 1 October 2020, HC 320

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Health & Social Care Committee and Science & Technology Committee, [Coronavirus: lessons learnt](#), joint inquiry, HC 877

¹¹ Health & Social Care Committee, [Workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care](#), inquiry, HC 703

¹² Health & Social Care Committee, [Workforce burnout and resilience in the NHS and social care: oral evidence - 20 October 2020](#), HC 703

¹³ [Letter](#) from Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP (Chair, Health & Social Care Committee) to Prerana Issar (Chief People Officer, NHSE/I) on NHS workforce, 21 October 2020

While your letter did clarify the work that is going on regarding workforce, especially modelling in light of COVID-19, the letter failed to address a number of the specific requests for information I set out in my letter. These are:

- Confirmation that workforce numbers would be published after the Spending Review, and would be independent forecasts of the workforce numbers needed over the next 10 years, broken down by specialty and skillset
- Confirmation that the change to a one year spending review would not delay the publication of your 10 year workforce projections
- Confirmation of the date by which the Committee would be able to scrutinise the modelling and the number of professionals NHSE/I estimate will be required to deliver the 10 year Long Term Plan.

I am disappointed that these questions have not been directly addressed, particularly in light of the urgency I described and the limitations this places on the Committee in providing effective and fully informed recommendations. **I would therefore be grateful if you could ensure that substantive responses to the points listed above are provided by Thursday 3 December 2020.**

The Committee recognises the significant pressures on both the Government and NHS England & Improvement but the responses to our recommendations are key to understanding what work is currently underway to support the healthcare system during this critical time, and in supporting our on-going inquiries.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeremy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

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