



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

POC_1314644

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

15 March 2021

Dear Jeremy,

Re: Health and Social Care Bill

Thank you for your letter setting out your support for the Health and Care Bill as well as your views on areas of improvement.

Firstly, on the role of the Care Quality Commission, I strongly agree with you that the CQC will have an important role to play in ensuring that Integrated Care Systems are held to account. It is, indeed, essential that we ensure appropriate oversight is in place to drive improvement, reinforce public accountability, and which supports the effective transition to ICSs – and that this mechanism has sustainable funding.

Developing system oversight mechanisms is, of course, complex. We will want to ensure that any role for the CQC is complementary to and distinct from NHSE's oversight activities. With that in mind, I have asked DHSC officials to work closely with the CQC and NHSE to develop a proposal that is underpinned by the principle of complementarity, to ensure that the roles they play in the oversight of systems add value and improvement at each stage without introducing new bureaucratic burdens. Oversight mechanisms will include a summary rating for ICSs and will be underpinned by full data sharing.

Secondly, in response to your proposals regarding the Health Services Safety Investigations Body, I thank you for your support for the creation of the HSSIB and the "safe space" proposed to underpin its investigations. Our intention is that participants can provide information for the purposes of an investigation in confidence and therefore feel able to speak openly and candidly with the HSSIB.

Regarding the concern you have noted around the proposed regulation-making power, the intention is that it would allow us to add to the list of exemptions in future, and therefore would build some flexibility into the clauses. This would allow for the possibility to consult more widely on any additional material that should be excluded from protection under safe space. We would expect HSSIB to be able to continue feeding into discussions around safe space based on its operational experience. I would also like to reassure you that the

regulation-making power could not be used to amend any of the exemptions set out in the primary legislation.

As we bring forward the NHS Health and Care Bill and work on detailed system design, I look forward to continued positive engagement with the Health and Care Committee in our collective goal of helping local health and care systems deliver higher quality care to their local communities.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is stylized with a large 'M' and a cursive 'att'.

MATT HANCOCK