



Department of Health & Social Care

*From Karin Smyth MP
Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care*

*39 Victoria Street
London
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Layla Moran MP

Chair, Health and Social Care Committee
House of Commons
Palace of Westminster
London SW1A 0AA

Friday 8th May 2026

Dear Layla,

Subject: Response to the Committee's Letter on the NHS 10 Year Workforce Plan and Neighbourhood Health

Thank you for your letter of 8 January 2026, following the Committee's evidence session on "Delivering the Neighbourhood Health Service: Workforce in England." I welcome the Committee's focus on the workforce challenges and opportunities as we seek to deliver the Government's ambition for neighbourhood health.

The 10 Year Health Plan set a clear ambition to shift care from hospitals into the community, and in doing so build a Neighbourhood Health Service which will bring care closer to local communities, convene professionals into patient-centred teams and end fragmentation.

Neighbourhood health provides the unifying framework that brings together what is already underway across primary care, community services, urgent care, prevention, digital, estates, and population health.

The Neighbourhood Health Service will make it easier for people to access care closer to where they live, including in neighbourhood health centres. Delivery will be locally led, with systems determining how neighbourhood health is designed to meet local population need. This will factor in how services may need to look different across rural and urban areas.

The Neighbourhood Health Service will also move us towards a fully digitally enabled health service. We are striving for digital services to improve access, experiences, and outcomes for the widest range of people, based on their preferences, as any digital healthcare benefits will be limited if people remain digitally excluded.

Neighbourhood Health Centres will provide easier, more convenient access to a wide range of health and care services on people's doorsteps, joining up NHS, local authority and voluntary services as a one-stop shop. There will be a Neighbourhood Health Centre in every community. The Government has announced its commitment to deliver 250 Neighbourhood Health Centres, with 120 delivered by 2030, through a mix of public private partnership and public capital.

In March 2026, we published a Neighbourhood Health Framework to empower local leaders to develop and scale neighbourhood health. This is designed to provide

clarity and consistency to support joined-up partnership between ICBs and local authorities, as they work together through Health and Wellbeing Boards and with their partners, to develop locally led Neighbourhood Health Plans.

The framework covers that Integrated Neighbourhood Teams will bring together different professions and partners to work side by side to support people. These teams know their neighbourhoods inside out and can tailor care to what matters most for local people.

The ambition to move care into the community is a long-standing one, but one that has not been fully achieved in the past. It necessitates a fundamental transformation of our service model, which cannot be delivered without the support of the workforce.

We recognise that the new Neighbourhood Health Service will require a neighbourhood workforce, with staff working together across different teams, organisations and settings. The 10 Year Workforce Plan will therefore set out how we ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right roles, to deliver safe, effective and efficient care in neighbourhoods. To do that, we aim to:

- make neighbourhoods **great places to work**, with strong leadership and opportunities to develop;
- ensure there is the training and development for staff to deliver a new model of care that is more **proactive, preventative and personalised**, with a relentless focus on improving health outcomes and stopping needs escalating;
- enable staff to work together seamlessly across boundaries as part of multi-disciplinary **integrated teams**.

People will experience better care, closer to home, that is easier for staff to deliver.

To deliver these aims, we are developing a suite of policy options to deliver the ambition of the hospital to community shift, and address concerns about the disparity of esteem and experience across acute and community settings.

We have engaged extensively with organisations and experts to test these policies and ensure they meet the scale of our ambition. This has included convening a group of system focused experts and holding workshops with the Social Partnership Forum to ensure the plan meets the needs of staff.

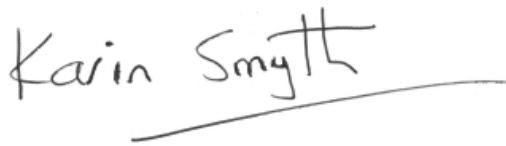
We are actively considering how we can ensure health and care staff want to work in neighbourhood settings and making it easier for them to do so by removing barriers to integration so that teams are empowered to deliver the highest quality care for patients, taking their individual needs into account. We will also consider how we can rebalance the supply of staff across the country, recognising that some areas face

particular shortages and that this tends to disproportionately affect the most deprived areas.

I would be delighted to meet with you following publication to discuss further.

Thank you again for your constructive challenge and support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Karin Smyth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

KARIN SMYTH

Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care