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From Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP

24 November 2020

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

Email to:

Dear Matt,

Government commitments on maternity services to support the work of the Independent Expert Panel

The Health and Social Care Committee published its report on *Process for independent evaluation of progress on Government commitments* on 5 August 2020. The report explains that the Committee will establish and commission an Independent Panel of Experts to assess the Government's commitments and the progress that has been made against them in a particular area of healthcare policy. The Panel's first area of investigation will be maternity services.

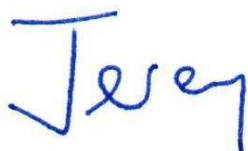
We are pleased to inform you that the core members of the Panel have now been appointed. In order to support the Panel's evaluation process as set out in the report, we are inviting you to provide information on the Government's specific commitments in the area of maternity services from at the least the last five years. Where appropriate, we would also welcome information that goes beyond this five-year period. We understand "commitments" to be broadly construed and include targets, pledges or ambitions introduced by the current Government or previous administrations, which are now the focus of the Government and/or its associated bodies. The Panel will use this list to inform its future work. **Please could you send us this information by Thursday 10 December 2020.**

The Committee is currently running a standard Select Committee inquiry into the *Safety of Maternity Services in England*. We would like to make clear that this inquiry is a separate piece of work to the Panel's assessment of the Government's commitments in the area of maternity services, although the two are likely to have areas of overlap and linkage.

We are at an early stage in setting up the Panel and are very excited to be trialling this new method of scrutiny. We recognise that this new process will raise questions and involve learning for those involved so your staff should not hesitate to contact the Health and Social Care Secretariat with any questions, either about this specific request, or the Panel's processes more generally. As the Panel's work progresses, there will be further opportunity for the Government and its arm's-length bodies to provide their input.

In closing, we should emphasise that one of the key reasons for the Committee deciding to establish the Panel is our desire to provide fair and transparent assessment of Government policy, separate from party politics, and you have my assurance that we want the Panel's processes to be as objective and transparent as possible. We are also mindful of the unprecedented pressure your Department and its associated public bodies have been under in the past six months in leading this country's COVID-19 response.

Yours,



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



Professor Dame Jane Dacre
Chair, Expert Panel – Health and Social
Care Committee