



Department
of Health &
Social Care

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

POC_1331035

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

18 May 2021

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your letter and your continuing support for the proposals in the Health and Care Bill. I was very pleased to note that the Health and Social Care Committee has endorsed our proposed reforms of health and care.

As you are aware, I fully support an enhanced role for the CQC in overseeing Integrated Care Systems and my officials have been working closely with the CQC and NHS England to develop detailed proposals. Indeed I see these new powers for the CQC as an excellent opportunity not only to inform the public about the quality of health and care in their area, but also as a way to review progress against our aspirations for delivering better, more joined up care across Integrated Care Systems.

I note your recommendation that quality and safety of care should be a core domain of the CQC reviews and would like to assure you that, alongside integration and leadership, quality and safety will be a core focus when rating Integrated Care Systems. I completely agree that we need a methodology that is robust and commands public confidence, and this point reinforces the need to find a way to reflect quality and patient experience strongly in the approach that is developed.

My officials will continue to work closely with the CQC and NHSE to develop the detail of the review methodology and the rating system, and we will set out further details in due course. In line with our stated principle of complementarity, we will continue to seek to ensure that the new review mechanism and rating system adds value and improvement at each stage while avoiding introducing duplication or unnecessary regulatory burdens into the system.

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.

Yours ever,

MATT HANCOCK



Health and Social Care Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP

17 May 2021

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

Letter by Email

Dear Matt,

I was pleased to see that the recent Queen's Speech reaffirmed the government's commitment to bringing forward a Health and Care Bill. You will have seen that the Health and Social Care Select Committee published its report on the White Paper's proposals for this Bill last Friday.

As I said in the press release accompanying this report, "We broadly support the proposed changes provided the new Integrated Care Systems are held accountable for the quality and safety of care delivered through transparent CQC assessments". I therefore welcome your commitment to include in the Bill provisions to enable the CQC to undertake ratings of Integrated Care Systems. These ratings have been incredibly successful for health and care providers and are easily understood by patients.

Ahead of the publication of the Bill it would be useful if you could clarify that the inspections and ratings of Integrated Care Systems will include a domain that focuses on the safety and quality of care and is named as such. This was a key recommendation of our report and one the committee believes is vital to the success of the new reforms.

There are two main reasons why this is so important. Firstly, it is crucial that ICSs are inspected on issues that mean something to patients. Nothing is more important from a patient point of view than the safety and quality of care they receive. A situation in which an ICS receives a glowing inspection report but is actually responsible for poor and unsafe care would soon lose public confidence. Including a specific inspection domain on quality and safety will prevent this from happening. It would also have the advantage of being consistent from a patient point of view as they are already familiar with this approach from the ratings they see given to hospitals, GP surgeries, and care homes.

Secondly, it is very important that regulatory structures do not pull providers and ICS boards in opposite directions. Providers are, rightly, focused by their CQC inspections on quality and safety so it is very important their overseeing bodies are as well if there is to be the deep collaboration we all seek. The CQC already has a significant amount of data on safety and quality and has built up much expertise assessing providers on such a basis so can make such assessments at relatively low cost - but removing safety and quality would risk regulatory conflict, disincentivising the collaboration that is at the heart of what these reforms aim for.

Finally we discussed the possibility of an outcomes domain. This is something I welcome as good outcomes are the ultimate objective of any healthcare system. But I would caution against outcomes being examined as part of the same domain as safety and quality because improving outcomes invariably involves many aspects of public health policy which, following the pandemic, is surely something that deserves separate consideration. This is logically and policy-wise quite distinct to the critical need for any healthcare system to deliver high quality, safe care that reduces the risk of avoidable harm and death.

Ahead of Wednesday's Queen's Speech debate on the health reforms, I would therefore be most grateful if you could confirm that Integrated Care Services will indeed be inspected against a quality and safety domain as part of their overall Ofsted-style rating. I can report this to the House in my contribution to Wednesday's debate if given the opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeremy". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted to the right.

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