



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Edward Argar MP
Minister of State for Health

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

020 7210 4850

Baroness Andrews
Chair, Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

5th May 2021.

Dear *Kay*,

The Blood Safety and Quality and Organs, Tissues and Cells Common Frameworks

Thank you for your letter of 27 April concerning the two DHSC frameworks mentioned above. I am grateful for the Committee's continued engagement.

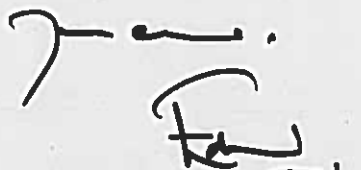
I would like to re-assure you that there are already good working relationships, regular engagement, open communication and collaboration across the UK on blood, organs and non-reproductive tissues and cells policy.

In addition to informal day-to-day discussions, officials meet quarterly to review progress, while regular updates are provided to senior officials. This approach will continue and will help establish if there any specific issues that may require escalation and involvement of senior officials. The arrangements will of course be kept under review in case there is a need for more frequent meetings and senior officials' meetings.

As part of the joint decision making, dispute avoidance and resolution process, the intention is for policy discussions to take place first and any disagreements to be addressed at official level. As set out in Appendix II of both frameworks, officials and Ministers in Northern Ireland will continue to be involved in policy development and discussions to resolve disputes where required.

If changes are to be introduced through the Northern Ireland Protocol, one or more administration(s) would initiate the Risk Assessment Process to fully consider the impact on patient safety and confidence and the JMC(EN) Common Frameworks principles. The decisions at the end of that process would still require collective sign-off by all Ministers across the UK. Ministers ultimately retain the right to take individual decisions for their administration. However, every effort will be made at working level to resolve any disagreements in difference of approach.

I hope this clarifies our arrangements. I look forward to working with you and the Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee in the summer.


EDWARD ARGAR MP