

From the Permanent Secretary
Sir Chris Wormald



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Rt Hon Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
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Sent via email to: pubaccom@parliament.uk

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Dear Chair

PAC REPORT – ADULT SOCIAL CARE MARKETS

The Department's response to the Committee's report on adult social care markets¹ has not been included in the September 2021 Treasury Minute publication. I am writing to you to express my apologies for the delay and to explain why it has not been possible to include the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) response in the September 2021 publication.

Since this Spring, the enormous amount of work taking place to develop proposals for social care reform has been treated with extreme sensitivity, with detailed information on the scope, content, and timing of reform proposals being restricted to a small number of people in Government. This confidential approach, and the fact that cross-Government discussions were ongoing at Secretary of State and Prime Minister level, meant that several policy teams within DHSC did not know how their policy areas would be affected by future reform proposals.

On 07 September 2021, the Prime Minister announced the Government's plan for health and social care, including its initial proposals for social care reform. To avoid confidentiality breaches, wider policy teams in DHSC were only made aware of the date and detailed content of the announcement shortly before the Prime Minister spoke in Parliament. It was only possible for the DHSC teams responsible for responding to the Committee's report to anticipate what amendments would be needed on the day of the announcement.

After the announcement, it was clear that the responses to five of the six recommendations from the Committee would need to be amended extremely quickly to meet the Treasury Office of Accounts' (TOA) deadline for inclusion in the September 2021 Treasury Minute publication. These amendments were significant enough for the revised response to require senior DHSC clearance. The response was signed off at

¹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6289/documents/69334/default/>

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pace, shortly after the deadline, but unfortunately this was too late for it to be included in the latest publication.

I hope this letter is helpful in explaining the circumstances surrounding this work and the difficulties arising from the timings of last week's events. DHSC treats this matter with utmost seriousness as part of its accountability to Parliament and a significant amount of work went into trying to meet this deadline. I can assure you with full confidence that DHSC's response to this report will be included in the next Treasury Minute publication.

Yours sincerely,

Chris

Wormald

**SIR CHRIS WORMALD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**