



Department of Health & Social Care

From the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

12 November 2021

Dear Jeremy,

I am writing to elaborate on a number of the points raised during the 2 November 2021 Committee session.

As discussed at the session, following your recommendation, we have introduced an amendment to the Health and Care Bill to give the Care Quality Commission (CQC) a role in reviewing across integrated care systems (ICSs). I would like to again reassure the committee that quality and safety will be central to these reviews. As we made clear in the Bill's committee stages and as the CQC have themselves stated we intend for 'quality and safety' to be one of the three themes of these reviews, alongside 'integration' and 'leadership'.

On the question of ratings, this is something that we will continue to work with the CQC on as they develop their methodology and approach. We agree with the Committee that it is important that there is consistency across the system and that the reviews are transparent and accessible to the public. A rating could prove an effective way of achieving this. However, we need to ensure ratings can be applied in a meaningful way, based on robust methodology. Over the coming year, the CQC will develop and test the assessment methodology and approach to ensure that they are robust, command public confidence and can be adapted to different sized geographies.

In regards to your query on our intention to publish the proportion of face to face appointments in England at practice level, the 2019 agreement between the BMA General Practitioners Committee (GPC) in England and NHS England *Investment and evolution: A five-year framework for GP contract reform to implement The NHS Long Term Plan* contains a commitment to publish activity and waiting times data for individual GP practices. We have been clear that we will not be publishing 'league tables' as suggested by several media outlets. It also contains plans to roll-out a patient reported experience measure.

All general practices and primary care networks in England are required to participate in NHS Digital's 'Appointments in General Practice' data collection. *Our plan for improving access for patients and supporting general practice*, published by NHSEI in October 2021, sets out that NHS Digital is working to publish activity and waiting time data at individual practice level as soon as possible. This will include the proportions of appointment by different professions and by different appointment modality. As the new data comes on stream, patient reported satisfaction levels will also be published.

As part of wider work on NHS data transparency overall, NHS England and NHS Digital will then consider how best to create a simple visual tool – learning from the UK Coronavirus Dashboard – to allow anyone to understand different aspects of general practice performance.

Regarding the impact of ‘Discharge to Assess’ policy on unpaid carers, it is important to note that we do not expect unpaid carers to need to give up work or reduce their working hours to look after friends or family while their long-term health and care needs assessments are completed.

As our discharge guidance already states, unpaid carers need to be involved in discharge planning decisions when the patient has new or additional care needs, including whether they are willing and able to provide care. This discussion should inform discharge pathway planning. Where unpaid carers are not willing and/or not able to provide care, the guidance is clear that should be taken into account in discharge arrangements.

The assumption given in the impact assessment for the Health and Care Bill, which states ‘we assume that unpaid carers of patients on pathways 0 or 1 may need to allocate more time to their care provisions where local areas follow a D2A model’, is a modelling assumption rather than a requirement of discharge policy. This is in anticipation of the situation that could occur when carers are able, and make a choice, to care for a loved one for a short period of time following discharge pending long-term needs assessments being completed.

We are working closely with carers organisations to set out protections for carers in new statutory discharge guidance. We will also work with the Department of Education to ensure protections for young carers are reflected in this new statutory discharge guidance.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid'.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP