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From Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP and Professor Dame Jane Dacre

2 March 2022

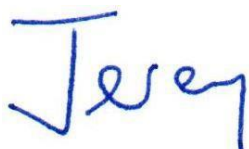
Dear Maria

The Health and Social Care Committee published a report into the safety of maternity services in England in July 2021. Alongside the Committee's report, our Independent Expert Panel published a report with the findings of their evaluation of the Government's progress against its policy commitments in the area of maternity services in England. Both the Committee and the Panel's report highlighted the inequality in outcomes for mothers from ethnic minority backgrounds.

We were therefore pleased to see the Government announcement regarding the taskforce to "level-up maternity care and tackle disparities" on 23 February 2022. We did not see any reference to when minutes from the meetings of the taskforce would be published or how the task force will update the public on its progress. Would you be able to provide further information on this?

In addition, evidence submitted to the Committee's inquiry by Health Education England estimated that maternity services were short 1,932 midwives. Evidence from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists suggested that a 20% increase of obstetricians and gynaecologists on maternity units was needed, which NHS Providers estimated this would require an extra 496 consultants working in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. In the announcement regarding the new task force, it was also stated that the NHS would seek to hire 1,200 more midwives and 100 obstetricians. Could you set out how the Department arrived at these figures? Will the NHS seek to hire more midwives and obstetricians in addition to this in the coming months?

Yours,



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



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