

## **Written evidence submitted by Geoffrey Smith (HSC0017)**

I have been involved as a volunteer in patient and public involvement in the NHS and social care since 1994. My professional career has been at Director level in local government and in the private sector.

### **Transparency and public and patient involvement in Independent Care Systems**

At present practice among Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) and Independent Care Systems (ICS) on holding meetings in public and making papers available to the public and the media appears to vary. Some STPs have expressed the view that because they are not constituted as a public body, or a decision-making body, they are not subject to the duties of NHS bodies for patient and public involvement in the National Health Service Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012) and the Public Bodies (Access to meetings) Act 1960.

NHS Trusts and CCGs are required to meet in public and so conform to the expectation of transparency that is part of the NHS Constitution.

In June 2019, the Health Select Committee report on NHSEI proposals for change recommended “that all STPs and ICS should meet the highest standards of openness and transparency in the conduct of their affairs by holding meetings in public and publishing board papers and minutes”.

The NHSEI paper on the response to its consultation on its proposals states “52. A number of responses stressed the need for transparency in appointments and decision-making. Legislation should set out core requirements in terms of openness and transparency. This could include requirements on NHS ICS Boards and health and care partnerships to hold meetings in public, publish papers in advance, maintain a register of members’ interests, hold an AGM and publish an annual report.”

The White Paper sets out proposals for the governance of ICS. It also proposes Place bodies in the proposed structure supporting the ICS bodies. There is no information on the governance of these Place bodies but because their remit is to secure integration of health and social care it is important that their work is transparent and open to the public. They should therefore be subject to the duties of NHS bodies for patient and public involvement in the National Health Service Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012) and the Public Bodies (Access to meetings) Act 1960. This would also remedy the lack of any requirement of patient and public involvement in Primary Care Networks

I therefore ask the Committee to recommend that the Bill provides that the Independent Care Systems and the proposed Place bodies are all made subject to the duties of NHS bodies for patient and public involvement in the National Health Service Act 2006 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012) and the Public Bodies (Access to meetings) Act 1960.

Geoffrey Smith

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