



Department
of Health

*From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
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Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, Chair
Health Committee
House of Commons
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Dear Sarah,

Mandate to NHS England for 2016 to 2017

Thank you for your letter of 3rd December about the consultation on the mandate to NHS England for 2016-17.

As you say, the mandate is important as it helps ensure that the NHS is accountable both to Parliament and the public. The mandate consultation is not, though, a consultation on the future of the NHS, as it was construed by some, but on the objectives we set for NHS England. The consultation document explained that we propose to set objectives that endorse the Five Year Forward View (the NHS's own vision for the future) and are in line with the Government's manifesto commitments, following the recent General Election. These documents already set out the vision for the future of the NHS, and the mandate sets out NHS England's part in delivering that vision.

There is not a statutory requirement to consult the public on the mandate to NHS England. The statutory requirement is for the Secretary of State to consult with NHS England and Healthwatch England before specifying objectives and requirements in the mandate, and for the mandate to be laid before Parliament when published. We wanted to go further and publish our proposals for setting the mandate so that stakeholders and the public can feed in their views. The consultation was announced in a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament on 29 October, published online, tweeted by the Department of Health, briefed to the Health Service Journal and circulated through a number of DH and NHS bulletins. In previous years with longer consultation periods, the Department received 200-300 responses, mostly from organisations in the health sector. In fact, even with a shorter consultation period, this year we received over 130,000 responses. This unprecedented volume of responses

provides a rich and valuable set of data about public views not only of the mandate, but also about the future direction of the NHS more widely, which we are carefully considering.

In determining our approach to consultation, the Government took account of the Cabinet Office's consultation principles. Many Government consultations are four weeks long. In this case, the timeframes reflected the circumstances surrounding this year's mandate - a General Election, the Government's spending review on 25 November and the need to give the NHS time to plan for 2016-17. We aim to publish the final mandate and a response to the consultation (including a summary of responses received) before Christmas, ahead of NHS planning guidance and CCG allocations which are also published before Christmas.

Given that this year we are setting a multi-year mandate and budget for NHS England, the NHS planning guidance and CCG allocations will also be multi-year, which means the NHS will need to begin planning to 2020. It is therefore even more vital that the mandate is published in good time to allow the NHS sufficient time to plan. Unfortunately we are therefore unable to extend the length of the consultation period.

Thank you for your Committee's interest in the mandate to NHS England. I suggest that Lord Prior, Minister for Health and lead minister for the mandate, would be better placed than Alistair Burt to speak to your Committee about it in the New Year.



JEREMY HUNT