Dear Sarah,

I agreed to set out the measures that are in place to ensure that all people, such as those who are sleeping on the streets, who have no documentation, will receive the care that they need.

First, I will address the issue raised in the Health Select Committee meeting about vulnerable groups and GP registration. Anyone can seek to register with a GP practice by approaching one directly and submitting a written and signed application to join its list of NHS patients. Proof of address is normally requested when the application form is filled in, but a person can register as a temporary resident simply by virtue of being present in a GP’s practice area. If a patient cannot produce any supportive documentation but states that they reside within the practice boundary then practices should accept the registration. Practices can only turn down an application for non-discriminatory reasons, such as if their lists are closed to new patients. Their reasons must not relate to, amongst other things, race, gender, social class, age, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, disability or a medical condition.

Once registered as a NHS patient, a range of services will be provided free of charge, regardless of whether a person is ordinarily resident in the UK or not. This includes the following:

- primary medical services provided under Part 4 of the NHS Act 2006 ("the NHS Act");
- primary dental services provided under Part 5 of the NHS Act;
- primary ophthalmic services provided under Part 6 of the NHS Act;
- equivalent services, provided under the NHS Act.

This means that GP and nurse consultations, along with services provided by health visitors and school nurses, are provided free of charge. In addition, the National
Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 2015 ("the Charging Regulations") provide that certain services are in any event not chargeable, including services provided for the diagnosis and treatment of infectious and sexually transmitted diseases, and accident and emergency services.

For those health services that are within the scope of the charging regulations, entitlement to access these services for free is based on ‘ordinary residence’ in the UK. A person is ‘ordinarily resident’ in the UK if that residence is lawful, adopted voluntarily and for settled purposes as part of the regular order of his or her life for the time being, whether of short or long duration.

In addition, certain persons who are not ordinarily resident will be exempt from charging under the Charging Regulations, for example asylum seekers, failed asylum seekers supported by the Home Office or a local authority, children looked after by a local authority and victims and suspected victims of modern slavery.

Under the Charging Regulations, there is no reason why a person of no fixed abode cannot pass the ordinarily resident test, as long as they meet the ordinary residence criteria. In determining whether charges are to be made under the Charging Regulations, service providers must make such enquiries as are reasonable in all the circumstances. We expect providers to take into account the fact that in some circumstances it will be particularly difficult for a homeless person to provide documentary evidence of their ordinary residence status.

We know that some groups of patients, including the most vulnerable, will not always be able to present identification documents. As is currently the case, organisations to which the Charging Regulations apply will need to train staff to help all patients demonstrate their eligibility, including when they don’t have the relevant documentation. These measures should ensure that ordinary residence status can be established by means other than the provision of documentary evidence.

The NHS will always provide immediately necessary care, including maternity care, to any patient, regardless of their status in relation to the Charging Regulations.

\[Signature\]

JEREMY HUNT