From Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, Chair

Meg Hillier MP, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee

Letter by email to pubaccom@parliament.uk

14 May 2018

Dear Meg,

Thank you for your letter of 3 May to all select committee chairs concerning the Government’s response to the PAC’s recommendation that it publish details of the workstreams to support Brexit.

Your Committee’s recommendation was very much in line with recommendations of successive reports on Brexit by the Health Committee. In our most recent report, we recommended that “the Department of Health and Social Care produce a comprehensive list of all the issues relating to the supply of medicines, medical devices and substances of human origin which require contingency planning for the UK leaving the EU” (Brexit: medicines, medical devices and substances of human origin, para 6). That recommendation followed an earlier one, from the end of the last Parliament, in which we said that “the Department of Health [should] produce a comprehensive list of those issues that will require contingency planning” (Brexit and health and social care—people & process, para 6), a recommendation which the Government rejected. We argued Far from undermining the UK’s negotiating position, we consider that clarity about contingency planning is necessary to guarantee patient safety and continued health supplies. There are implications for research and development, safety and supply chains for people and health systems both here and across the EU-27. We believe that it is important that both sides acknowledge this and remain firmly focused on the needs and safety of patients. The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has published its guidance on what is necessary for the UK to maintain continued access to medicines in a ‘no deal’ scenario, and we believe that this one-sided picture may harm public confidence if it is not possible to compare it to the Government’s planned approach.

I welcome your Committee’s recommendation, which echoes the call for transparency which my Committee has made twice, and you and your PAC colleagues have my support in pursuing it.
Yours sincerely,

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP
Chair of the Committee