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THE PRIME MINISTER

11 January 2017

*Dear Clive*

Thank you and your co-signatories for your letter of 6 January. This Government is committed to providing the funding the NHS needs and ensuring that we have a sustainable social care system, and I welcome your concern and focus on these essential services.

I accept there are pressures on social care at the moment due to the demographics of an ageing and growing population. As you know, that is why we took the necessary steps in the Local Government Finance Settlement to help in the shorter-term, making available almost £900 million of additional social care funding over the next two years. Together with the funding made available at the Spending Review in November 2015, this means local authorities can increase social care spending in real terms in every year of the Parliament.

However, more money is not the only answer. There is variation in performance across the country that cannot be explained by different levels of spending, with half of social care delayed discharges in just 24 local areas. In the medium-term we need to make sure that the health and care system learns from the best performers to raise standards across the system.

Nevertheless, if we are going to give people the reassurance they need in the longer-term that their social care needs will be met, we must find a sustainable system of social care for the future. This Government has committed to doing that.

You rightly point out that there have been several reports, commissions and cross-party talks over many years, so rather than another review, I am keen to take action. Obviously we will want to discuss any proposals that are brought forward and for Parliament to be engaged.

The social care system is inextricably linked with the health system, and it is natural that any long-term solution for social care considers the relationship between health and care. This Government has gone further to integrate health and social care than any other before it. We have brought budgets together for the first time through the Better Care Fund and provided the NHS with the resources to fund its own plan to build a more responsive, modern health system. As I said when we met last month, the focus we should have as a Government now is on looking at how the plans that NHS England have for the next five years are put in place.

Thank you again for your letter. The challenge of reforming social care so it works for everyone who needs it will not be easy. I am determined to meet that challenge.

Your ever

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Theresa May', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr Clive Betts MP