

Rt. Hon. Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State
Department of Health and Social Care
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July 2018

Personal Data

I am writing to congratulate you on your appointment at this important time for health and social care.

As you may know, the Nuffield Trust is an impartial think tank which studies health and social care policy in the UK, and uses our expertise in health data and research to evaluate and understand developments in the health service.

With new funding secured and the NHS ten year plan being developed, the next few months will be vital in setting a course to meet key targets and raise health service standards to the best international levels.

We are looking into how to learn from previous major health service strategies to find the best way to deliver results for patients. Important questions include how to make change happen in such a large organisation and which priorities to choose. The plan will also need to be ready to work from the current starting point of a serious shortage of staff and unsustainably high levels of bed occupancy. I would very much like to meet with you to discuss your aims, and whether our thoughts and findings might be helpful.

Care outside hospital is likely to be ever more central to the NHS in an age of long-term illness, and general practice plays the pivotal role. We have looked at how using different types of staff and tailoring services to patients could help GPs do more, despite the especially severe shortages in the sector.

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We had also been speaking to your predecessor about finding ways to address the difficult plight facing many small and rural hospitals. I hope you will continue looking at this issue which is so important to ordinary people across England, whether with us or the leaders of some of the hospitals involved.

Despite Theresa May's important announcement, vital questions around health and social care finance still remain. The funding settlement for NHS capital spending and public health will be crucial in determining the speed of progress in the long term. We are also looking at how much money within the NHS should be free for transformation, and how this might be used.

I was pleased to see your article in 2012 making the case for a comprehensive insurance system for social care. This remains one of the great unsolved policy problems of our time. We have published two reports looking into how Japan has developed a working system of social care insurance in recent decades. We would be very happy to discuss this with you or your officials, as we did for your predecessor.

Lastly, I noticed the ambition for increasing the speed of digital innovation you showed in your previous Department. We have published some major reports looking at where the health service should be aiming as technology advances, underlining especially the crucial role of shared electronic health records.

The NHS has enormous potential as a source of data and a test bed for experimentation which could be world-leading. However, cumbersome approval processes and gaps in vital data mean this potential currently goes unfulfilled. I hope you will look at how to improve this and that our experience might be of some help.

I wish you all the best of luck in your new role, and look forward to meeting you in person.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Data

Nigel Edwards
Chief Executive
Nuffield Trust