Executive summary

Here we set out the key elements of national support available for the social care sector for winter 2020/21, as well as the main actions to take for local authorities, NHS organisations, and social care providers, including in the voluntary and community sector. Working together will ensure that high-quality, safe and timely care is provided to everyone who needs it, whilst protecting people who need care, their carers and the social care workforce from COVID-19.

National support

The government will continue to provide national leadership and coordination as we move into the next phase of the COVID-19 response. We will continue to provide essential resources, evidence and high-quality data to empower local leadership. We are committed to understanding and responding to inequalities in health and the impact of the virus, learning lessons from research, and to listening to those with lived experience.

Over the coming months, we will:

- Continue to engage across the sector, including with local authorities, care providers, people with care and support needs and carers, to understand their needs and to provide appropriate support.

- Continue to provide financial support to the sector by providing over £500m of additional funding to extend the Infection Control Fund to March 2021. This is in addition to the £3.7 billion in emergency funding for local authorities, and the £588 million for discharge as part of the £3 billion NHS winter funding to cover the costs of ongoing care for the remainder of the financial year.

- Lead and coordinate the national response to COVID-19 and provide support to local areas, where needed, as set out in the Contain Framework.

- Appoint a Chief Nurse for Social Care to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

- We are working up a designation scheme with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for premises that are safe for people leaving hospital who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are awaiting a test result.

- Continue to develop and publish relevant guidance, accessible for everyone supported by social care services, and update policies and guidance based on the latest science and evidence. We will work proactively with the sector to communicate vital updates to this Winter Plan and other guidance.