



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

7th August 2020

New Content,

RE: ARTHRITIS AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of arthritis and related conditions, specifically in relation to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had this year; your comments upon which I have read with great interest.

I know that arthritis can be a very painful and debilitating condition. While it was important to postpone some NHS activities to protect individuals and enable resources to be used as efficiently as possible during the Coronavirus outbreak, my colleagues in the Department of Health & Social Care, as well as NHS staff, restarted elective procedures as soon as it was safe to do so.

Indeed, I was delighted when the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care announced on the 27th April that, from the following day, NHS services could begin restarting, including the most urgent, like cancer care and mental health support.

The exact pace of this restoration was determined by local circumstances, according to local need and demand, and according to the number of Coronavirus cases being dealt with by any given hospital.

I fully support the mission to make the NHS the safest, highest quality healthcare system in the world, and I pleased that there are over 14,000 more doctors and over 13,000 more nurses on our wards since 2010.

As I am sure you are aware, the Prime Minister recently announced the Government's intention to provide the NHS with an additional £33.9 billion by 2023/24 - this is the largest, longest, funding settlement in the history of the NHS. This landmark investment to help secure the long-term future of our NHS, which I pressed for as your local MP, is extremely welcome, and I hope you agree it demonstrates the Government's commitment to properly funding our NHS and public services: the nation's health is the Government's top priority.

The *NHS Long Term Plan* (LTP) laid out how this funding will be invested, with a focus on primary, community and mental health services, helping to deliver prevention and to manage demand. For example, all smokers who visit hospital will be offered access to an NHS smoking cessation programme, and better integrated local care will help to support patients to make healthy choices to prevent diabetes and cardiovascular



disease. These preventative measures will help to reduce the number of people in need of secondary care services, enabling better access for patients in need.

Alongside this, the NHS was asked to undertake a clinical review of standards relating to waiting times. This must be clinically led to enable the best, and safest, delivery of care for patients. I understand that NHS England has now prepared proposals, covering waiting times across the service, including elective procedures, mental health, cancer, and A&E.

The Government will now carefully consider the proposals before taking any next steps, and in the meantime, will continue to hold the NHS to account on its existing standards. I shall, of course, monitor progress closely locally, and I continue to recognise the challenges and needs of those who suffer from painful conditions like arthritis.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

Tom

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**