



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

12<sup>th</sup> June 2022

LONDON SW1A 0AA

*Dear Andrew,*

**RE: NHS WORKFORCE PLANNING**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of workforce planning and the *Health and Care Act*. I have read your comments with interest.

Our NHS relies on effective workforce planning to ensure we can meet the health and care needs of local communities and I applaud the dedication of healthcare professionals across a range of professions, including those working tirelessly in our community here in North Northamptonshire.

Clause 41 (previously Clause 35) of the *Health and Care Act* requires the publication of a workforce report at least every five years - covering the whole of the NHS including primary, secondary and community care. This report will increase transparency and accountability in the workforce planning process. For example, the report would set out the role and responsibilities of new Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) about how they would ensure the delivery of effective local workforce planning.

I recognise that people would like to go further, and note the level of support that an amendment made to the legislation during passage through the House of Lords received from Peers, patient groups and professional bodies. However, I disagreed with this amendment because I believe it was not necessary to add further, or different, reporting duties on workforce planning.

As my colleague the Minister for Health, Edward Argar MP, stated, we cannot predict all future workforce needs, which is why the report is required to be published at a minimum of every five years. This flexibility will allow an updated report to be provided earlier than the statutory required period to reflect any changes to roles and responsibilities.

It should also be kept in mind that in addition to Government measures in the legislation, Health Education England has been asked to review long-term strategic trends for the health and social care workforce, and NHS England has been asked to develop a workforce strategy (including long-term projections) which will be published in due course. It is vital that workforce planning is closely integrated to wider planning across health and social care. Two key NHS bodies will be merged to help put long-term planning and strategy for healthcare staff recruitment and retention at the forefront of the national NHS agenda.


More broadly, the Government is delivering against its key pledges to increase the numbers of GPs and nurses - there are 1,200 more GPs and 27,000 more nurses compared to 2019. In addition, the number of medical school places has increased by 25 percent since 2016/17.



Finally, Clause 157 of the *Health and Care Act* is designed to provide more flexibility to the regulation of healthcare professionals, so that it can change to better support patients, support our health and care services and help the workforce meet future challenges. Health and care professionals are regulated on a UK-wide basis, and it is important that there are consistent standards to allow the flexibility for healthcare professionals to be able to work across the UK. The case for reforming professional regulation has long been acknowledged by bodies representing healthcare professionals. The existence of nine separate professional regulatory bodies is inefficient and confusing to patients. A consultation on the regulation of healthcare professionals concluded on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

Ultimately, I believe that the measures in the *Health and Care Act* will help to clarify who is responsible for workforce planning and ensure the NHS can provide the workforce needed to meet the health and care needs of the population.

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 PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**