



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

From Helen Whately MP  
Minister of State for Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

By email only

To Tim Farron

January 2023

Dear Tim,

I am writing to you in your capacity as chair of the APPG for Radiotherapy. On Tuesday, the Secretary of State set out that the Department of Health and Social Care, in consultation with NHS England and colleagues across government, will develop and publish a Major Conditions Strategy.

The Strategy will set out a shift to integrated, whole-person care, building on measures that we have already taken forward through the NHS Long Term Plan. Interventions set out in the Strategy will aim to alleviate pressure on the health system, as well as support the government's objective to increase healthy life expectancy and labour market participation.

Our approach will address the fact that our health and care system has been built in silos, often focused around specific diseases or organs in the body. It will outline how our workforce model needs to adapt, reflecting that the NHS is caring for patients with increasingly complex needs and with multiple long-term conditions. The Major Conditions Strategy and the upcoming NHS Long Term Workforce Plan go hand-in-hand to set out the standards patient should expect in the short term and over a five-year timeframe.

As you know, the health system faces long-term challenges to ensure the public enjoy longer and healthier lives. Currently in England, 5.4 million people live with cardiovascular disease, around 8.6 million live with chronic respiratory disease and 8.2 million people live with mental health issues. An increasing number of us live with one or more major conditions. For example, nine in ten dementia patients have another long-term condition. Half of people with a heart or lung condition have musculoskeletal disorders.

The Strategy will meet these challenges head on, in supporting the shift in the health system's model towards preserving good health, and the early detection and treatment of diseases. We have a proud record of developing innovative new treatments in the NHS. Diseases that were once a death sentence have become conditions that can be managed over the long term and we are increasingly capable of detecting diseases at an early stage, in some cases before symptoms emerge. Intervening at this point will reduce demand downstream on health and care services.

I am deeply grateful to all APPGs who have contributed to previous work on mental health, cancer, dementia, and health disparities, and can assure you that these contributions will inform the development of the Strategy. This work will combine our key commitments across cancers, cardiovascular diseases (including stroke and diabetes), chronic respiratory diseases, dementia, mental ill health and musculoskeletal disorders. By bringing conditions strategies together and taking forward the findings from previous consultations, we will be able to exploit synergies in approach and ensure care is better centered around the patient.

I will set out opportunities for patients, stakeholders and industry to contribute to the strategy in due course, and would welcome and encourage your participation in its development. We intend to publish an interim report in the Summer.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Whately', with a large, sweeping underline that loops back under the 'y'.

**HELEN WHATELY**