



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

SW/dq
23 March 2018

Rt Hon Theresa May, MP
Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to urge you to set up a Parliamentary Commission on Health and Social Care. This letter has the full support of 98 MPs, including 21 select committee chairs as well as senior backbenchers from across the political spectrum. In November 2017, 90 backbench MPs from across the House of Commons also wrote to urge a cross party approach to this pressing issue, which is consistently at the top of the list of concerns for all our constituents.

The system wide pressures over recent weeks cannot be wholly attributed to 'flu and the cold snap.' They also reflect more serious underlying issues facing the NHS, public health and social care. These systems are overstretched, poorly integrated and are no longer able to keep pace with rising demand and the cost pressures of new drugs and technologies. The relentless workforce pressures are also leading to increasing problems with retention and in many areas now outpacing efforts to improve recruitment.

Over the course of the winter, there has been intensive debate about the pressures on health and social care. A growing number of us, from across the Commons, and more importantly the wider public, want to see a break in the political deadlock that has prevented a realistic approach to increasing resources both to address the current situation and to take a long term view of future funding.

We are seriously worried that a green paper addressing the funding solely of social care for older adults will fail to make progress. There is an urgent need to take a whole system approach, including to prevention, if we are to reduce future demand. It will be vital to address wider pressures on the NHS and social care if we are to persuade the public of the need to contribute more and with fairness across the generations rather than this falling entirely on those of working age in employment. Without action, patients will experience a serious further decline in services and the blame for that will be laid squarely at the door of politicians.

Recent history suggests that it is the government which gets blamed when there is deadlock. But the experience with the environment, pensions and banking is that it is possible to forge a consensus. Whilst we will never entirely depoliticise health and care, without a degree of consensus in arriving at difficult decisions about raising revenue, it is patients and families who suffer.



In the wake of the Libor scandal, the Government set up a special select committee of both Houses of Parliament. The Banking Commission, chaired by Andrew Tyrie MP, commanded the support of both front benches, drew on considerable cross Party expertise and was appropriately resourced. This model has several advantages over a Royal Commission, including the ability to build support in Parliament and report in a timely fashion. By contrast, the last Royal Commission on Long Term Care of the Elderly which reported in 1999 was cumbersome and made little difference. Our constituents cannot afford another policy failure on social care or health and this would also have serious political ramifications. We propose that a Parliamentary Commission on Health and Care is set up to mark the 70th anniversary of the NHS.

It should be seen to be independent and the Government should not advocate any solutions in advance; however it would be able to set the scope of its work and appoint the chair.

It could investigate and make recommendations on the following:

- The likely scale of demand and need for health and adult social care across the UK from 2019-2034, taking into account potential productivity and quality improvement including health prevention to mitigate future demand.
- Opportunities for productivity and quality improvement including opportunities for prevention to improve wellbeing and mitigate future demand; and the advantages of a single budget for health and social care.
- The net cost to the taxpayer – assuming universal coverage of health.
- The broad range of funding options including – but not solely limited to – a hypothecated tax or contribution. It should also consider who would bear the tax or make the contribution: it can assess mechanisms for spreading the cost fairly across generations and different income streams.
- The Commission could engage the public in a national discussion on achieving a long term settlement in order to help build consensus.
- The Commission should take into account the emerging proposals from the Green Paper on social care.

The Commission should report before Easter 2019.

We would need to engage with the devolved administrations on how best to represent their interests in the process.

We very much hope the Government will support the setting up of a Parliamentary Commission. An alternative may be for the House to set this up itself or for this to be looked at by a “super” Select Committee – but our preference remains for this to be set up by you, ideally with the support of the Leader of the Opposition and Liberal Democrats.

I hope to discuss this with you at the Liaison Committee on Tuesday.



Yours sincerely,

Dr Sarah Wollaston

Sir Kevin Barron

Hilary Benn

Clive Betts

Yvette Cooper

Mary Creagh

Frank Field

Lilian Greenwood

Rob Halfon

Harriet Harman

Meg Hillier

Helen Jones

Norman Lamb

Julian Lewis

Maria Miller

Nicky Morgan

Andrew Murrison

Bob Neill

Rachel Reeves

Tom Tugendhat

Stephen Twigg

Bim Afolami

Peter Aldous

Heidi Alexander

Rushanara Ali

Heidi Allen

Ian Austin

Adrian Bailey

Sir Henry Bellingham

Richard Benyon

Luciana Berger

Bob Blackman

Crispin Blunt

Nick Boles

Peter Bone

Ben Bradshaw

Tom Brake

Sir Vince Cable

Alistair Carmichael

Ann Coffey

Rosie Cooper

Stella Creasey

Sir Ed Davey

Steve Double

Tim Farron

Caroline Flint

Paul Flynn

Vicky Ford

George Freeman

Mike Gapes

Kate Green

Helen Hayes

Wera Hobhouse

Kate Hoey

Christine Jardine

Darren Jones

Gillian Keegan

Liz Kendall

Stephen Kinnock

Peter Kyle

Jeremy Lefroy

Chris Leslie

Sir Oliver Letwin

Stephen Lloyd

Seema Malhotra

John Mann

Alison McGovern

Catherine McKinnell

Mark Menzies

Johnny Mercer

Andrew Mitchell

Layla Moran

Sir Mike Penning

Dan Poulter

Mark Prisk

Jim Shannon

Barry Sheerman

Gavin Shuker

Ruth Smeeth

Angela Smith

Gareth Snell

Sir Nicholas Soames

Anna Soubry

Jamie Stone

Gary Streeter

Wes Streeting

Jo Swinson

Sir Hugo Swire

Derek Thomas

David Tredinnick

Anna Turley

Derek Twigg

Chuka Umunna

Ed Vaizey

Matt Western

Dr Philippa Whitford

Paul Williams

John Woodcock