



April 2022

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about workforce planning and the Health and Care Bill. 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.

Clause 35 of the Health and Care Bill would require 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 the level of support that an amendment made to the Bill in the House of Lords has received from Peers, patient groups and professional bodies. However, I disagree with this amendment because I believe that the Government's clause is sufficient in its current form and it is not necessary to add further or different reporting duties on workforce planning.

As my colleague Ed Argar - the Minister for Health - has 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 be kept in mind that in addition to Government measures in the Bill, the Department for Health and Social Care has already commissioned the development of a long-term 15-year strategic framework for the health and social care workforce. This is a welcome piece of work and I look forward to its publication, which I am told is expected in Spring 2022.

It is vital that workforce planning is closely integrated to the 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.

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.

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



Chris Heaton-Harris

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Clause 157 of the Health and Care Bill 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 31st March 2022.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY