26 September 2019

The Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Dear Secretary of State,

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN NHS BILL

We write with unanimous support for a focused NHS Bill within the forthcoming Queen’s Speech.

A highly targeted Bill, as recommended by NHS England and Improvement, will help remove barriers that make it hard for NHS organisations to collaborate with each other and their many local partners. This collaboration is essential if the ambitions to improve people’s health and wellbeing set out in the NHS Long Term Plan are to be delivered.

There is strong agreement amongst the people and organisations we represent, across the health, local government and the voluntary and charitable sectors, about what the Bill should seek to achieve. There is no support for another damaging NHS reorganisation which we believe would distract from the important local work being undertaken to bring services together. The Bill should be tightly focused on the issue of care integration to foster collaboration within the sector, including removal of section 75 of the 2012 Act with its unnecessary procurement processes.

Less fragmentation across services and more collaboration will help deliver better care and support for patients and service users. None of us believe that legislation alone will achieve this goal – we need new behaviours and stronger relationships. But we all agree that rapid, targeted, legislative reform would remove some of the obstacles to collaborative working, allowing us to deliver person and community centred health and care that focusses on what matters to people.

This Bill could set an historic precedent and shape future ways of working, with its development heavily influenced by NHS staff, patients and local leaders. The initial proposals have gone through an extended engagement process. The cross-party Health and Social Care Select Committee, through its inquiry and report, has helped to shape an emerging consensus. NHS England and NHS Improvement have subsequently adjusted and improved their proposals, which we welcome.

We ask that you, the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England and NHS Improvement keep working closely work with us, our members and the communities they serve. In that way the Bill will command maximum support prior to its introduction.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Charlotte Augst
Chief Executive, National Voices

Niall Dickson CBE
Chief Executive, NHS Confederation

Sir Robert Francis QC
Chair of Healthwatch England

Dr Clare Gerada MBE
Co-chair, NHS Assembly and GP, Southwark

Sara Gorton
Head of Health, UNISON

Professor Sir Chris Ham CBE
Co-chair, NHS Assembly and Chair, Coventry and Warwickshire STP

Chris Hopson
Chief Executive, NHS Providers

Cllr Ian Hudspeth
Chairman, Community Wellbeing Board
Local Government Association

Dame Donna Kinnair
Chief Executive and General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing

Professor Carrie MacEwen
President, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges