



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

From Edward Argar MP  
Minister of State for Health

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Iain Stewart MP

By email to: [iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:iain.stewart.mp@parliament.uk)

17.4.2022

Dear *Iain*,

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 April on behalf of a number of your constituents about workforce planning requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2022. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I read the correspondence with care and appreciate your constituents' concerns. Clause 41 of the Act places a new duty on the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to publish a report on the workforce planning and supply system in the NHS in England at a minimum of every five years, with NHS England and Health Education England (HEE) assisting in its preparation if asked. The aim of the report is to be transparent about the workforce system.

I can assure you and your constituents that continuing to grow the workforce remains a top priority for the Government. This year we have seen record numbers of staff, including doctors and nurses, working in the NHS. Compared to February 2021, there are almost 4,300 more doctors and over 11,800 more nurses working in the NHS. There are now over 1.2million full-time equivalent staff working in NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups in England – almost 34,500 more than a year ago. We are making good progress on the 50,000 nurses target and have recently expanded the number of medical school places. Workforce levels and projections are already kept under close review by the department and the other bodies involved in workforce planning and supply.

With regard to long-term workforce planning, in July 2021 the department commissioned HEE to work with partners and review the long-term strategic trends for the health and regulated social care workforce. This will review and renew the long-term strategic framework for the health and regulated social care workforce, to help ensure we have the right numbers, skills, values and behaviours to deliver world-leading clinical services and continued high standards of patient care. For the first time, the framework will also include regulated professionals working in social care, such as nurses and occupational therapists. It will also look at the main factors in workforce demand and supply in the longer term and consider how they will influence the required future workforce. This will help to identify the main strategic decisions that need to be made, to develop a shared set of planning assumptions and identify the actions required. This work is now nearing completion and publication is expected soon.

Building on this work, the Department of Health and Social Care has recently commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce strategy, and key conclusions from this work will be published in due course.

To make the most of this work, on 21 November we announced that we are merging HEE with NHS England to ensure greater integration of service, workforce and financial planning. This will put long-term planning and strategy for health care staff recruitment and retention at the top of the NHS' agenda.

I hope this reply is helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Argar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**EDWARD ARGAR MP**