

The Patients Association  
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The Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson MP  
The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

December 13<sup>th</sup> 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to congratulate you on being returned to office, and also to ask for your reassurance about your Government's plans in respect of health, care and wellbeing.

Patients are increasingly aware that the NHS is in crisis, and staring down the barrel of what could be its worst winter ever. The A+E four hour target has seen the worst breeches in its existence; 4.6 million people are on a waiting list for treatment; and hospitals were in permanent winter crisis conditions even through the summer. The NHS continues to pare back the services and treatments it offers, both locally and nationally, in an effort to balance the books. The impact on patients is clear: longer waits for appointments and treatment, prolonged periods of pain, discomfort and anxiety, greater risk of needing emergency treatment and of being stuck on a trolley in a hospital corridor when that happens, and worse overall outcomes because of the delays. Patients cannot feel assured of receiving safe, effective and dignified care, despite the unstinting efforts of NHS staff.

We welcome your plans to progress swiftly with the legislation to help implement the NHS plan, but we are less convinced by your proposals to enshrine your proposed NHS funding uplift in law. While welcome, it is a short measure that does not restore services as a whole to their long-term growth trend. Rather than setting it in stone, will you instead announce a full funding settlement for the parts of the NHS that it does not cover?

You have been re-elected on a manifesto that promises cross-party talks to solve the social care crisis. We do not see how this can be reconciled with your statement in Downing Street immediately after being appointed Prime Minister that you would fix the social care crisis once and for all, with a clear plan that you had prepared. It is deeply disappointing to learn that there is, apparently, no plan after all. The available options on social care are clear and well-understood: we need action urgently, not more dithering and political wrangling. Without a full social care settlement, the benefits of any new funding for the NHS cannot be fully realised.

On Brexit, you have set a clear direction of travel. The British people have been promised great benefits from Brexit, and you must now deliver them. This includes ensuring that it is beneficial to the UK's health, care and wellbeing; we look forward to hearing you outline how this will be achieved.

Your party's manifesto commitment to providing more nurses is welcome. We would like to hear full details as soon as possible about how they will be funded and recruited, and also of how the proposed new NHS visa scheme will operate in order to help resolve the workforce crisis. We strongly recommend that the social care workforce be included in its scope, as its crisis is at least as pressing as that in the NHS.

When I wrote to you in July I recommended that you adopt a strategic, cross-governmental approach to improving the health and wellbeing of the population. Many areas of government policies have a crucial bearing on the health and wellbeing that people enjoy, including housing, the environment and welfare policy. Even something as simple as a Cabinet sub-committee, chaired from the Cabinet Office, could make a big difference in ensuring that all government policy is aligned to curating the health and wellbeing of the population.

I repeat this recommendation more urgently now. The platform on which you have been elected does not clearly contain any such strategic vision, and your proposals for a tax-cutting budget in the new year are alarming – we cannot see how such an approach will have a positive impact on health inequalities. Not only must policies be aligned, but they must be fully funded, and it is imperative that the Government is honest with the people about the fact that high quality public services require substantial funding.

Patients told us during the election campaign that they had no confidence in our politicians, of any party, to act responsibly in respect of health and care. I hope that you will be able to provide reassurance on all of these pressing issues as a matter of urgency.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Power". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Power  
Chief Executive

CC: Secretary of State for Health and Social Care