

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

10 March 2016

Dear Secretary of State

I have been asked to write on behalf of the LGA Executive to express our concern about the pace of implementation of sustainability and transformation plans (STPs) and the lack of consideration and involvement of local councils in the process.

The LGA strongly supports the Five Year Forward View, and broadly supports the objective of developing a single long-term plan for every local area to achieve better health outcomes, better services and financial sustainability. We see STPs as a significant milestone in plotting the route to full integration of health and social care by 2020. However, the speed at which decisions have been taken on the footprints has meant there has been little or no time to engage in a proper discussion with local government about how it should relate to other local geographies such as Health and Wellbeing Board areas. Furthermore, although the final footprints have not yet formally been made public we have heard from councils in many areas of the country they do not take account of the broader footprints for either existing or proposed combined authorities. This may create a barrier to devolution plans including the integration of health and social care – and whilst we recognise that the process of agreeing single footprints will never please everyone, we would like to see the issues properly debated so that we can be confident the key factors in each area have at least been taken into account.

As local politicians we have spent much time and energy supporting the most recent NHS reforms to work and helping to lead the health and wellbeing agenda alongside our CCG and GP colleagues, providers and local citizens. In many areas, health and wellbeing boards have driven the move to a place based approach for improving health and wellbeing outcomes and transforming services. We have done this by creating new alliances and ensuring greater democratic accountability of the NHS, enabling local people's voices to be heard in the transformation of services. We are concerned that existing Better Care Fund (BCF) Plans and joint health and wellbeing board strategies (JHWS) may be ignored in the rush to develop STPs. That would be a missed opportunity to ensure that STPs build on the good progress that has already been achieved.

Despite helpful recognition in the STP letter of 16th February of some of the complexities that will need to be worked through with local government, in most areas of the country local government – and local elected leaders in particular – do not yet feel they have had the opportunity to engage in the process, and nor has there been a formal consultation process which would allow for or encourage local debate. This comes at the same time as many councils and health partners are developing more ambitious forms of integration and devolution plans to secure the long-term sustainability of public services. Where we know these new alignments to be a success, they have been led, designed and implemented locally.

We recognise the pressures on the NHS and the need for both financial savings and manageable planning areas, but there is a risk that this approach could destabilise the

system and local relationships, at a time when we are working closely with NHS colleagues to create a new vision of integrated, efficient, person centred services to deliver a sustainable system for the future.

I would be very grateful to meet you to discuss how we can best work with the timescale and process for developing STPs to ensure that it builds on the good joint work already in place and provides a strong foundation for local integration plans.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Izzi Seccombe
Chair
Community Wellbeing Portfolio
Local Government Association

Cc:
Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Alistair Burt, Minister of State for Community and Social Care