



Department of Health

From David Mowat MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Health and Care

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Dear Health and Wellbeing Board Chairs,

I am writing to you in your capacity as a Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) Chair to highlight the General Practice Forward View, recognising the important relationship that primary care has with the delivery of local health and wellbeing strategies. This document is part of the future vision for the NHS being developed as part of NHS England's overarching Five Year Forward View.

The role of general practice is central to our health and care system, but we know that pressure on GPs and other general practice staff is increasing. The Government and NHS England have recognised the need for additional support and, on 21st April 2016, NHS England published the GP Forward View. This is a package of support to help get general practice back on its feet, improve patient care and access, and invest in new ways of providing primary care. It sets out that we are investing an extra £2.4 billion a year for general practice services by 2020/21, which represents a 14% increase in real terms. The overall investment includes a £500 million five year Sustainability and Transformation package to support GP practices, which contains measures to help boost the workforce, drive efficiencies in workload and modernise primary care infrastructure and technology.

However, as HWBs will be very well aware, general practice cannot work effectively in isolation, and the GP Forward View looks at general practice's role in relation to the wider system – both how improved integration can provide additional support to general practice and the contribution that general practice staff make on wider social issues. It also highlights the important role that primary care can play in supporting integration across local health and care systems.

We acknowledge that many HWBs are already promoting strong and effective relationships between general practice services and other health, social care, public health and wider local services; and that they recognise the centrality of primary care in integrating their local health and care systems and the need to ensure access to all relevant support services. These links are going to be even more important in the future, and so I am writing to ask all HWBs to review the GP Forward View document and consider what more Boards could do to build effective relationships between primary care and wider local services.

There are many examples of effective collaboration with primary care at a local level, including:

- *Just What the Dr Ordered* (published by the Local Government Association in April 2016) contains case studies on social prescribing from: East Riding of Yorkshire;

Blackburn with Darwen; Knowsley, Halton and St Helen's; Luton; Rotherham; Cotswold; Doncaster; Tower Hamlets; and Forest of Dean:
<http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7632544/L16-108+Just+what+the+doctor+ordered+-+social+prescribing+-+a+guide+to+local+authorities/f68612fc-0f86-4d25-aa23-56f4af33671d>.

- Northumberland's network of community hubs with strong voluntary, community and faith sector engagement and support planners working with GPs.
- Social prescribing in Gloucestershire:
<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/extra/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=63219&p=0>.
- Wiltshire's community hubs where primary care services are co-located with other services in buildings such as libraries:
<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/hwb-2015-annual-report.pdf>.

HWBs will additionally already be engaged in the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) process. As set out in the NHS Shared Planning Guidance, published in December 2015, the success of STPs will depend on having an open, engaging, and iterative process that involves clinicians, patients, carers, citizens, clinicians, local community partners including the independent and voluntary sectors, and local government through, for example, health and wellbeing boards, building on existing plans such as Health and Wellbeing Strategies and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments.

The arm's length bodies responsible for the NHS Five Year Forward View – NHS England, NHS Improvement, the Care Quality Commission, Public Health England, Health Education England and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence – have asked for local engagement plans as part of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan process, building where appropriate on existing engagement through health and wellbeing boards and other local arrangements, including GP services.

In summary, given the potential benefits outlined above, I am asking HWBs to consider how, through their work and specifically through Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies, they can encourage action to develop and strengthen relationships with general practice services in local areas, in order to generate benefits for the whole system and better outcomes for patients.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Mowat', with a horizontal line underneath.

DAVID MOWAT