

09 September 2020

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
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Chair
Dame Clare Marx

Dear Matt,

Reducing bureaucracy in health and social care

Chief Executive and Registrar
Charlie Massey

Thank you for recognising the work of the GMC in your *Future of Healthcare* speech. We're already learning the lessons of the pandemic, and we're keen to accelerate reforming medical regulation, to empower doctors and protect patients.

That's why I wanted to respond to your bureaucracy consultation to explain the things we're doing and how government can help. The ambitions I've set out below will help the Government to deliver its agenda and create a sustainable medical workforce ready to respond to the UK's future health needs.

Reforming medical regulation

The pandemic and the use of our emergency powers has demonstrated what we can achieve when we work closely with Government and when we're unconstrained by outdated legislation. We need legislation that allows us to be dynamic and flexible.

For example, more flexibility and discretion in fitness to practise (FtP) alone will release resource that we would use to drive improvements in the system and anticipate risk rather than just acting after the event. This would reduce stress for doctors and patients, and give doctors more time to do what they do best, delivering good clinical care.

Reform will also support your ambitions to address NHS workforce challenges. Changes in secondary legislation will allow us to streamline our processes and allow more senior doctors to come from overseas to practice in the UK. It would also mean that more SAS doctors already working in the NHS could transition more easily into senior roles. This is a significant bureaucratic burden and its removal would be widely welcomed.

Your consultation also provides an opportunity to drive better regulatory alignment. We're working closer than ever with other regulators like the NMC and CQC. But our different legislative frameworks risk entrenching historic regulatory silos instead of supporting the collaboration advocated by the Paterson and IMMDS reports. Legislative reform offers a once in a generation opportunity to align regulation – reducing burden and increasing effectiveness.

Supporting and empowering doctors through revalidation and appraisal

To support doctors in the pandemic, we supported local providers in pausing appraisals and made the decision to allow revalidation to be deferred, allowing doctors to focus on clinical care. As we restart these processes, we want to embed our learning from the pandemic, and we've identified a number of ways to enhance revalidation, and make local clinical governance, including appraisal, stronger whilst reducing bureaucracy.

We're doing this is by encouraging the rebalancing of appraisal to include a wellbeing and developmental focus for doctors, allowing them to reflect on the experience of the pandemic and identify where they can develop to provide better patient care. We're also challenging partners and employers to strip away unnecessary bureaucracy within appraisals and we're doing the same internally with revalidation.

Local governance can also be strengthened further by improving the Responsible Officer Regulations, to remove ambiguity and standardize them, which will reduce bureaucracy and improve patient safety.

Driving change through better data

Accurate and complete data can transform the NHS and patient safety. That's why we're aiming to record doctors' scope and location of practice, to understand what they do and where, so that we can deploy our resources more efficiently and proportionately to support the profession and protect patients. This will also significantly improve and enhance our data offering to the system.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on these issues, and we'll also continue to work with the health and social care system and your officials, on the legislative changes needed to improve healthcare regulation so that we can fully play our part in making the wider healthcare system fit for the future.

Yours sincerely,



Charlie Massey