

13 November 2025

The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Karin Smyth MP

Minister of State for Health

Department of Health and Social Care

Sent by email: dhsc.sofs@dhsc.gov.uk; pskarinsmyth@dhsc.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State and Minister,

We are pleased to welcome the government's clear ambition to deliver a long-term, system-wide approach to workforce planning through the NHS 10 Year Workforce Plan. As partners at the heart of the education and training pipeline, universities stand ready to contribute our expertise to ensure the Plan delivers a sustainable, evidence-led workforce across all professions – including doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, dental teams, and allied health professionals.

We recognise and strongly support the three major shifts the NHS 10 Year Plan seeks to deliver: from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention. These shifts will only succeed if education and training evolve in parallel. Universities are already adapting curricula to reflect the latest innovative technologies, expanding community-based learning, and integrating public health and prevention into training programmes. Universities are also committed to widening participation to the healthcare professions and are actively addressing geographical disparities in application numbers from young people. By working closely with the NHS, we can help ensure the current and future workforce is fully equipped to deliver care in new settings, harness technology effectively, and promote health and wellbeing at every stage.

We welcome the opportunity to present the wide-ranging contributions of our universities and our vision for the future NHS workforce through the recent call for evidence. This vision aligns with that of recent publications emphasising transformational working practices to support the NHS workforce to deliver the increased productivity required to ensure its future viability. However, the somewhat narrow focus of the call for evidence did not lend itself to responses addressing the education, training and research contributions to the future health workforce.

Education, training and research are integral elements of workforce planning, and it is imperative that this is recognised as the plan develops. Embedding higher education fully within the Plan will help secure a reliable flow of well-trained, highly skilled professionals to meet future demand across the breadth of health and care roles.

The clinical academic pathway is also a vital enabler of these shifts. Clinical academics link research, education, and clinical practice, driving innovation, improving patient outcomes, and ensuring the workforce remains evidence-led. Strengthening this pipeline, which has seen a worrying decline in recent years, in line with the ambitions of sector leaders set out in a statement of ambition and intent from participants of the Academy of Medical Sciences' Clinical Academic Summit, is a key initiative if we are to embed the implementation of patient care focused innovation throughout the health system.

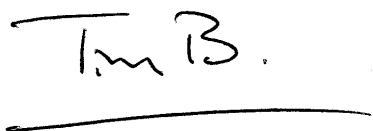
By placing education, training and research at the heart of the 10 Year Workforce Plan, government can ensure a more resilient, adaptable and prevention-focused health system that meets the evolving needs of patients and communities.

Given the workforce plan will now not be published until Spring 2026, this also presents a timely opportunity for the Department of Health and Social Care to work more closely with the Department for Education, NHS England, health regulators, local government and higher education providers. To help achieve this, we again ask the government to convene a joint ministerial taskforce. This taskforce would

coordinate efforts to expand student recruitment, increase clinical placement capacity, support degree apprenticeships, and strengthen workforce retention.

Our organisations are committed to working in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care, Department of Education, NHS England, and other stakeholders to shape a collaborative and joined-up approach that delivers improved quality for patients, staff, and the wider public. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can contribute constructively to the next phase of the Plan's development.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Tim Bradshaw
Chief Executive, Russell Group



Ed Hughes
Chief Executive, Council of Deans of Health



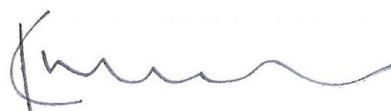
Professor Ewen McColl
Chair, Dental Schools Council



Dr Brooke Storer-Church
Chief Executive, GuildHE



Liz Hutchinson
Chief Executive, London Higher



Dr Katie Petty Saphon
Chief Executive, Medical Schools Council



Rachel Hewitt
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Vivienne Stern
Chief Executive, Universities UK



Vanessa Wilson
Chief Executive, University Alliance