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Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care,  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
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25<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Dear Matt

I am writing to congratulate you on retaining your position as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, following the appointment of the new Prime Minister and subsequent Cabinet changes. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your ministerial colleagues on issues of common interest and concern, to ensure that we deliver high quality health and social care services for the citizens across the nations of the United Kingdom and, in so doing, improve the health and wellbeing of the population.

As you know, Scotland said no to Brexit in 2016. As the EU Parliament election results of the 26<sup>th</sup> of May make clear, we meant it. We believe that a further extension of Article 50 should be negotiated with the EU to enable a second EU referendum to take place including the option to remain. It is clear now that too much time has been wasted and there is not enough remaining for that referendum to happen before the end of October.

Notwithstanding this position, as a responsible Government, we recognise that the four UK administrations need to work together to make sure that all the preparations are made to prepare and mitigate for potential impacts. The Scottish Government has been taking steps to mitigate for the potential impacts of a No Deal exit, not least in relation to the supply of medicines and medical devices and clinical consumables, clinical trials, reciprocal healthcare, and the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. This has involved close working between our administrations, at both a ministerial and official level. While this has not been without its challenges, I am aware that engagement and information sharing has improved over recent months across key policy areas, and I would request that this continues. Recognising that health and social care is largely devolved to the Scottish Parliament, there must be full sharing of all relevant information, including in relation to medicines supply, and we must be fully engaged and consulted on key decisions which relate to the delivery of health and social care in Scotland and the other nations of the UK.

Aside from EU Exit, there are a number of important issues on which I would welcome your positive engagement so that we can make progress.

Firstly, as you will be aware, the current **taxation arrangements for pensions is having a serious impact on key members of the NHS workforce**. There is a risk that affected staff's sense of being valued for the work they do, and of being appropriately rewarded for that work, is undermined as a direct result of this issue. I am also concerned to ensure we do not lose vital expertise from the NHS in Scotland.

For these reasons, I wrote to the former Chancellor on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May and the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, urging review of the pension taxation rules. I note that your Department launched on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July a consultation on proposed flexibility for the NHS Pension Scheme. The 50:50 flexibility proposed in the Interim People Plan does not provide the flexibility necessary, and I welcome the broadening of the consultation to include additional flexibility and measures. Nevertheless, I remain convinced that the most immediate and effective way to address this issue is to review the taxation arrangements, and I urge you to join me in pressing the Chancellor to undertake such a review at the earliest opportunity.

Secondly, you will no doubt be aware of the recent publication of **Scotland's drug related death statistics** covering 2018 (1,187 people died in 2018, three times the rate of the UK as a whole). Joe FitzPatrick MSP, Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing, has described this as an emergency, and has instigated a number of actions to address this. One of these has been to write to the Home Secretary (21<sup>st</sup> of July) to ask to meet with him and discuss this serious issue, but also to ask him to attend a UK wide summit in Glasgow on this topic. The former Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell MP, was also questioned about this (Scottish Questions on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July) and confirmed that the UK Government would take part in such a summit. As Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, I would very much welcome your support and the ongoing support of your Department in tackling this important issue.

The long-term harms to health from **childhood obesity** is also a high priority for the Scottish Government. I would urge you to continue to be ambitious in your actions in this area. Maintaining momentum on Public Health England's reformulation programme, expanding the scope of the Soft Drinks Industry levy to sugary milk drinks and restricting broadcast and on-line advertising of junk food are areas where progress is essential, if we are to protect children and ensure they establish healthy food preferences early in life. I look forward to your support in making progress in this area.

A fourth key issue relates to social care and in particular the **increasing levels and complexity of adult social care needs**. We would welcome continued engagement with you on your forthcoming green paper on social care. Your officials have been in touch to learn about our experience of introducing free personal and nursing care and I am keen to continue that dialogue within the context of our ongoing progress with integrating health and social care in Scotland. As you may know, the Scottish Government is taking forward a national programme to support local reform of adult social care, to ensure a high quality and sustainable social care sector both now and in the future. The programme, which I launched on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2019, has through a co-production process, developed a shared vision and set of priorities for achieving changes required to improve social care support in Scotland. The programme's priorities include a shared agreement on the purpose of adult social care support, with a focus on human rights; social care support that is centred on a person, how they want to live their life, and what is important to them; valuing and supporting social workers and social care workers, and unpaid carers; and investment in social care support, and looking at how it is paid for in the future. I look forward to continuing to liaise around our respective reform agendas.

We have also, over the past decade, made significant progress in **tackling Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAI) and containing Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**. Despite this progress, reducing HCAI and containing AMR remains a constant challenge; AMR, for example, is recognised as a major threat to health security globally. The scale of the threat from AMR and the case for action is set out in the [UK 5-Year action plan for antimicrobial resistance 2019 to 2024](#) and the [UK 20-year vision for antimicrobial resistance](#) published in January 2019.

Given the global nature of the threat, it is essential that we continue to take a four country approach and work collaboratively across the UK to both prevent HCAI and contain AMR. It is vital that we ensure the good working relationships which have already been established are maintained, enabling us to drive forward progress and deliver against the five year ambitions set out in the National Action Plan.

A sixth key issue relates to work to prepare for an **Influenza Pandemic**. My officials continue to work with colleagues in your department to consider what additional legislative measures may be required, in the event of an influenza pandemic, an important area for four-nation co-operation and engagement across the UK.

Finally, we are very proud of **our approach to safety and quality**, in particular the Scottish Patient Safety Programme which I know your predecessors have visited and adapted elements for England. We would be delighted to host you to see the work in practice or to include the work in a future meeting

I hope that this letter, and the issues I have highlighted, have been helpful in reminding you of the range of issues on which I hope we can build good working relationships to move things forward over the coming months. I look forward to ongoing engagement with you on these and other matters of importance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeane Freeman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**JEANE FREEMAN**