

Mr Chairman and members -

Over recent weeks the nation has quite rightly been celebrating the NHS's 70th birthday with much fanfare. I'm in no doubt that we all share in the joy that such a treasured institution has stood the test of time – so far.

Another birthday celebration that has slipped under the radar in comparison is the 130th birthday of local government. I wonder if the NHS would have reached such a grand old age were it not for the existence and support of Local Government

I was intrigued last week to see a news report on a doctor who was there at the birth of the NHS say it was created in the belief of making people fitter and healthier and that there would be a reduction in long-term costs to the country.

But, he also went on to say that, if anything, it's been a victim of its own success and the impact of an ageing population now means that social care costs are spiraling out of control.

Mr Chairman, I believe he was right.

That's where Local Government comes in, because both Public Health and Social Care Services are fundamental to the success of the NHS, now and in the future.

We cannot keep talking about the NHS Hospitals as being the only thing that matters. It is my challenge to Government and Parliament to talk about the NHS and Local Government in the same breath.

While I am delighted the Prime Minister has reaffirmed her government's unwavering support for the NHS with a pledge of an extra twenty billion pounds in future funding, we should be in no doubt that this will not solve all of the health service's problems.

Funding cannot simply be poured just into hospitals – when too little consideration is being given to the other vital elements of healthcare. Namely prevention and social care. The government needs to decide how it is going to fund our social care system and public health prevention services, and not just the acute aspects within the NHS.

But the Government seems reluctant to take the necessary action to invest adequately in these two vital elements of our nation's health and wellbeing. This risks leaving councils up and down the country, as well as the voluntary, community and faith sector – who all perform vital roles – powerless to ease the pressure on the NHS. And without that help there may be no birthday cake in another seventy years' time. In fact I doubt there will be a birthday cake in as little as 10 years' time.

My real concern is that Government and Parliament will miss the opportunity that is staring them in the face – by providing the necessary support and funding for prevention services and social care services that the public needs.

Mr Chairman, local government has made a lasting difference to generation-after-generation. Tackling poverty, building social housing, introducing universal education and – of course delivering public health and social care services.

Indeed, some of its achievements even predate the Local Government Act of 1888. Among these magnificent achievements are the health benefits resulting from Joseph Chamberlain's reforms to housing and the water system in Birmingham. They show that it would be wrong to assume local government is a new-comer to the health agenda.

If we are to save Britain's healthcare system – and we **must** – then Local Government needs fair and equal resources to improve Public Health and Social Care in our country.

There needs to be public scrutiny of the entire healthcare system, and today there is still no democratic governance oversight of the local doctors and community health services. I call upon government to empower Local Government to become the public scrutiny body for these vital front line services.

I also call on the government to give Councils responsibility for commissioning all public services that deliver health and well-being services in our communities.

I would urge Ministers to allow those councils who are willing, to be given the opportunity to pilot this approach.

It is our intention to present Joint Health and Social Care commissioning plans to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in September for approval. We want to be in the vanguard of change for our residents.

As a first step I firmly believe that there should be:

- 24 hour access to doctors during evenings and weekends, to release the strain on Accident & Emergency departments.
- Resources being made available to schools and other organisations to help identify mental health issues and signpost those with need to the appropriate area for early intervention.

When Local government was handed back responsibility for public health several years ago, funding was promptly cut but responsibilities remained. We can't continue with such huge disparities across the country. Indeed the public health grant for Local Authorities has fallen by 17% over the past five years,

and as you know, Mr Chairman, Surrey is one of the authorities hardest hit.

While funding the heart of the health service may win positive news headlines for Government and MPs, failing to resource many of the other key services that are accessed by large numbers of the population risks far worse news headlines in the future.

Mr Chairman, many of my Local Government Leader colleagues believe that the government is taking way too long to produce its Green Paper on adult social care.

There is also genuine concern that the paper will simply follow the same format as one of the dozen or so of its predecessors over the past two decades and be little more than warm words with no action and no long term solutions.

How can this possibly be good for the health of the nation?

Surely the Green Paper needs to be co-terminus with the NHS 10 year plan as they depend on each other, and the people who deliver the services on the ground **must** be invited to contribute.

Mr Chairman , I strongly believe Local Government needs much greater input into the green paper. Social Care services won't be delivered by MPs or Whitehall officials - they'll be delivered by Local Government - in our communities - with the many dedicated staff we have.

Over the last ten years we have all seen a huge transformation in Local Government services despite the significant financial challenges.

So there is a great deal the NHS can benefit from by working with Local Government to respond to the changing circumstances of local people. We know and understand the needs of our communities and are best placed to deliver the foundations of good health and wellbeing.

In order for Health and Social Care to work more effectively and efficiently together, I suggest Government needs to :-

- Ensure equalisation of public health funding across England
- Enhance funding for local GP and community services, enabling better access when people need it

- Design a stronger governance model, enabling local government to be more accountable for setting priorities and joint commissioning.

These actions will then reduce the numbers needing unplanned Hospital care.

Mr Chairman, our long-term vision should be

- A Public Health system that leads to real sustained life changing opportunities for all
- well-funded local GP and community services that become more effective and are more accountable to local people though Local Government
- Fewer people going into hospital when they don't need to
- Ensure the country has enough doctors, nurses, social care workers to increase the effectiveness of the health service system in this country.
- And appropriately resourced local social care services to ensure residents can return to their own homes as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman, we often hear about a chronic bed shortage at hospitals. It is our job to get as many people sleeping in their own bed as quickly as we possibly can.

That is what the guiding hand of local government can achieve.

When all the components of Health and Social Care systems are working smoothly together, there will be less of a call on Hospital services. Not only will this improve the quality of life for our residents but also we will have created a system that is both sustainable and financially affordable for the next generation and beyond.

The challenge now for Government and Parliament is to let local government do what it does best and come to the aid of the NHS so that both the NHS and Local Government can celebrate birthday after birthday.

To summarise Mr Chairman and members , I believe :_

- We all want an efficient and effective Health and Social Care system for everyone.
- We need investment in public health programmes to reduce demands on health services

- We need excellent local GP services with more evening and weekend services
- We need proper governance and accountability over local Health services
- We need to reduce the number of patients arriving and entering Hospitals for unplanned care, especially at weekends
- We need a local solution for Social Care services to ensure that all patients can be supported to return home and then enabled to live independently.

Finally and above all

- We need a health service that works closely with local government to do more to prevent chronic illness and to create a joined up system that recognises and addresses health needs as soon as possible

After all Mr Chairman, it is the public that fund these services and I suggest we have a right to expect everyone in Central Government, the NHS and Local Government to work together for the health of our Nation.

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