

## The Queen's Speech, May 2021

The Queen outlined the government's priorities for the year ahead, highlighting 30 laws that the government intends to pass in the coming year.

Health and care was at the heart of this Queen's Speech, saying that it "sets out how we will beat COVID-19 and back the NHS". Alongside the wide-ranging Health and Care Bill, the government has announced plans to continue to support the vaccine roll out, provide additional funding for the NHS, focus on prevention and reform the Mental Health Act. There was a renewed commitment to bring forward "proposals on social care reform", however there was no detail on what these proposals would entail.

This briefing contains an overview of key announcements relevant to health and social care, including the Health and Care Bill, along with a summary of other legislation and policies of interest.

### Health and social care focused announcements

The government set out health and care as national priorities as it seeks to "deliver a national recovery from the pandemic". The Health and Care Bill was announced alongside new measures on prevention and improving mental health.

The government also committed to continuing the vaccination programme as the way out of the COVID-19 pandemic, with planning underway for a potential booster campaign later this year. The government reiterated its intention to give additional funding to the NHS for the COVID-19 response and recovery, with £63 billion in 2020/21 and £29 billion in 2021/22. There will also be £325 million new investment in diagnostics equipment to improve clinical outcomes.

The government renewed its commitment to bring forward proposals on social care reform later this year as it continues to engage with partners on improving the social care system, although as yet there is no detail on what the proposed reforms will be.

## Health and Care Bill

The government will “bring forward legislation to empower the NHS to innovate and embrace technology. Patients will receive more tailored and preventative care, closer to home.”

The purpose of the Bill as described in the Queen’s Speech, is to:

- Lay the foundations for a more integrated, efficient, and accountable health and care system.
- Give the NHS and local authorities the tools they need to level up health and care outcomes across the country, enabling healthier, longer, and more independent lives.

The main elements of the Bill highlighted were:

- Driving integration of health and care through the delivery of an Integrated Care System in every part of the country.
- Ensuring NHS England, in a new combined form, is accountable to government, Parliament and taxpayers while maintaining the NHS' clinical and day-to-day operational independence.
- Banning junk food adverts pre-9pm watershed on TV and a total ban online.
- Putting the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch on a statutory footing to deliver a fully independent national body to investigate healthcare incidents, with the right powers to investigate the most serious patient safety risks to support system learning.

NHS Providers has undertaken significant engagement with the Department of Health and Social Care, and with NHS England and NHS Improvement, on the development of the proposals. We have also provided both written and oral evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee inquiry into the government’s White Paper. In developing our positioning, we have drawn on the views and expertise of members. Further resources including our full positions, can be found below:

- *Integration and innovation* white paper proposals and NHS Providers’ views:  
<https://nhsproviders.org/resource-library/briefings/on-the-day-briefing-the-department-for-health-and-social-cares-legislative-proposals-for-a-health-and-care-bill>
  - Written submission to the Health and Social Care Select committee:  
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/23179/pdf/>
  - Oral evidence to the Health and Social Care Select committee:  
<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/1783/pdf/>
  - Letter to the Health and Social Care Select Committee:  
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/25881/pdf/>
- Blog in the Health Service Journal: <https://www.hsj.co.uk/policy-and-regulation/five-priority-areas-for-scrutiny-in-the-forthcoming-health-bill/7029925.article>

## Prevention

The government will bring forward measures “to support the health and wellbeing of the nation, including to tackle obesity...”

The new Office for Health Promotion will work across the government to improve health, with a focus on delivering greater action on prevention. This includes:

- Action on obesity, including requiring large out-of-home sector businesses with 250 or more employees to calorie label the food they sell, and banning junk food adverts before 9pm on television and a total ban online.
- New air quality targets in the Environment Bill, with a focus on reducing public health impacts of air pollution.
- Additional funding for the ‘Quit for Covid’ campaign to encourage people to stop smoking.

## Mental Health Act Reform

The government will bring forward measures “to support the health and wellbeing of the nation, including to...improve mental health.”

NHS Providers has **responded** to the Department of Health and Social Care’s consultation on the government’s Reforming the Mental Health Act 1983 White Paper, which was published in January 2021. We look forward to supporting subsequent stages of the Act’s reform in the months ahead.

## Further policies and bills of interest

### Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

The government will bring forward measures “to address racial and ethnic disparities...”

The Independent Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities was established in 2020 and **reported** on 31 March 2021, “concluding that while racism clearly exists, the reasons behind disparities are complex, and often as much to do with social class, family structure and geography”.

The government is now considering the Commission’s findings and recommendations in detail, assessing their implications on future government policy, and will respond in due course.

### Developing the life sciences sector

The government “will build on the success of the vaccination programme to lead the world in life sciences, pioneering new treatments against diseases like cancer...”

The government has committed to strengthening the UK Life Sciences sector and aims to:

- Discover the treatments for diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's and heart disease.
- Deliver improved outcomes for patients across the UK and tackle health inequality.
- Bolster health resilience to ensure the UK is best prepared for any future healthcare challenges.
- Partner with industry, the NHS and academia to ensure the UK leads in science innovation in industries including genomics, early-stage diagnosis, and digital health.

The government published [Our Plan for Growth](#) on 3 March 2021. In it, the government committed to creating the most advanced genomic healthcare system in the world. A new life sciences strategy is expected this summer.

## New plan for immigration legislation

The government will bring forward measures "to establish a fairer immigration system that strengthens the United Kingdom's borders..."

The purpose of this Bill is to support the delivery of the new plan for immigration which seeks to support those in need of asylum and deters illegal entry. The Bill will correct historical anomalies in British nationality law which have prevented individuals from registering for or gaining British citizenship.

## Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill

The government "will strengthen and renew democracy and the constitution. Legislation will be introduced to...restore the balance of power between the executive, legislature and the courts."

The purpose of the bill is to repeal the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011. This would allow the government of the day to seek a fresh democratic mandate from the British public when it is needed.

## Procurement Bill

We understand that reform of procurement in the NHS will be impacted predominately by the Health and Social Care Bill which seeks to reduce the use of competition within new Integrated Care Systems. However public sector procurement is also subject to much broader reform under a new procurement Bill. The purpose of this Bill is to:

- Reform the UK's public procurement regime, making it quicker, simpler and better able to meet the country's needs while remaining compliant with international obligations. This will replace the current regime which was largely transposed from EU procurement directives.
- Make public procurement more accessible for new entrants such as small businesses and voluntary, charitable and social enterprises to compete for and win public contracts.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- Enshrining in law the principles of public procurement such as: value for money, public benefit, transparency, integrity, fair treatment of suppliers and non-discrimination.
- Overhauling complex and inflexible procurement procedures and replacing them with three simple, modern procedures, allowing the public sector more scope to negotiate with potential suppliers to deliver innovative new solutions.
- Introducing procurement processes that allow contracting authorities to buy at pace, for serious situations that are declared a crisis, with strengthened safeguards for transparency.
- Reforming the process for challenging procurement decisions to speed up the review system.

## Professional Qualifications Bill

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Create a new framework to recognise professional qualifications from across the world to ensure the UK can access professionals in areas of a workforce shortage. This will replace the interim system that gives preference to professional qualifications from the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.
- Enable the government to provide UK regulators with a consistent set of powers to enter into agreements with regulators overseas to recognise professional qualifications.

## NHS Providers press statement

Responding to proposals in the Queen's Speech today, the chief executive of NHS Providers Chris Hopson said:

"The Health and Care Bill announced in the Queen's Speech today sets out the biggest reforms to the NHS in nearly a decade, laying the foundations to improve health outcomes by joining up NHS, social care and public health services at a local level.

"Trust leaders broadly welcome the direction of the bill, but there are several areas where we will be seeking further clarity, reassurances and safeguards. First, trusts want to ensure their operational

independence, and that of the wider NHS, is protected. Second, they want to be in the driving seat when it comes to making changes to local services to improve care and keep patients safe. Third, they'll want to ensure there is no confusion or overlap between what they and the new Integrated Care Systems do. Trust leaders also want reassurances they won't be inappropriately instructed to restrict their spending on new equipment and buildings, risking quality of care.

"It's also vital that the bill puts a proper, funded, long term NHS workforce plan in place. This is all the more important given the sheer scale of the challenge facing the NHS in the years ahead, such as clearing the backlog of care.

"We are pleased the government has committed to providing more funding today to help the NHS recover and transform in the years ahead.

"Just £1bn in non-recurrent funding has been promised to the NHS to date to help clear the backlog for non-urgent operations, alongside £325m for diagnostics equipment. As a bare minimum, we need at least three years' extra dedicated funding, on top of what was promised in the May government's settlement and the money that's already been set aside for extra Covid costs.

"While the government outlined its agenda for NHS reform today, it's deeply disappointing that the Queen's Speech has once again failed to deliver a detailed plan which sets out the radical change we need on social care. The Prime Minister made a personal commitment to fix social care once and for all. He must now be true to his word."

## Useful links

[Transcript of the Queen's Speech](#)

[Accompanying briefing documents](#)

[Transcript of Commons debate](#)