

**To:** All Chief Executives in Primary Care Trusts in England

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Dear colleague

During the recent severe weather, my Ministerial colleagues and I have been constantly informed about how the NHS has responded. I want to convey our thanks and appreciation for the effective and committed way in which you and your colleagues have responded in often challenging circumstances. We have all seen the effect that the snow and ice have had on the country, yet the NHS and its partners have continued to provide quality care to their patients. Sir David Nicholson's letter of 23 November set out the importance of effective winter planning, strong leadership and joint working across organisational boundaries, and the last few weeks have shown that the NHS is more than capable of delivering against these criteria.

I have been very impressed by the dedication of NHS staff to keep services available. I know that many of you have made significant efforts to travel into work during this period, staying over at work as and when needed, to ensure that patient care is not disrupted. I am grateful for all of your efforts and am sure your patients and local community are too.

Primary and community care play an especially vital role in challenging periods such as this, providing care to people in the community and in their own homes, so that they do not need to go in to hospital. I have seen some excellent examples of joint working across local health and care organisations in recent weeks, and the importance of caring for people in the community rather than in hospitals cannot be understated. I have heard recent examples of health and care professionals going to extraordinary lengths to continue to care for their patients and clients, who are some of the most vulnerable in our communities. Your patients rely on your teams and your organisations more than ever during these months, and your efforts do not go unnoticed.

*From the Rt Hon Andrew Lansley CBE MP  
Secretary of State for Health*



I am aware that many of you will be continuing to work throughout the holiday season and I would like to reiterate my thanks to you and your teams for all your hard work, and encourage you to keep working together with colleagues across the health and care system to keep up the excellent response to winter demands. I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas period.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Lansley'.

Andrew Lansley CBE  
Secretary of State for Health