THE PRIME MINISTER   11 August 2021

Dear Patrick & John,

Thank you for your letter of 3 June about harnessing technology for the long-term sustainability of the UK's healthcare system, and your enclosed CST document detailing the opportunities of doing so.

I read your report with great interest and was particularly drawn to the points on prevention and early intervention, as well as the recommendation to empower people to take greater control of their health, and ways to secure a sustainable future for the NHS.
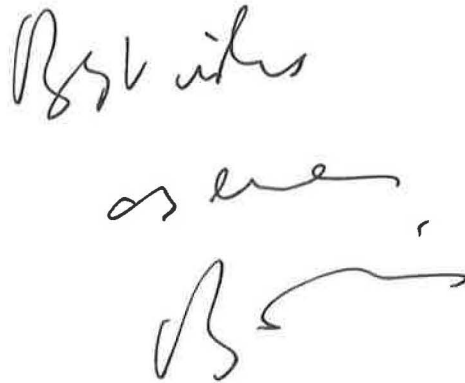
The Government shares your ambition to build on work in these areas and continue to drive this programme to ensure that the UK remains at the cutting edge of technology in healthcare. We are fully supportive of the priorities you identify where digital solutions can really help, many of which are particularly relevant to NHSX. As you will know, NHSX was created to drive the digital transformation of healthcare in the UK through digital innovation and data use.

Having developed several global exemplar hospitals in terms of digitisation in the past, our priority now is to ensure a greater 'levelling up' so that all hospitals, and indeed local integrated care systems, meet a minimum level of digitisation and connectivity of data. There are already a number of opportunities for areas that are keen on going further faster to do so, as demonstrated by the 5G work being run out of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the recently launched Partnership Award in NHSX.

There is an existing support offer for adoption of evidence-based technologies in the Academic Health Science Network. Through work with Health Education England on a digital-ready workforce, we have invested in skills development across the NHS from the boards to the frontline. NHSX is developing a learning system within each region that supports the adoption of digital technologies within frontline teams, while NHS England and NHS Improvement is devolving change resources to integrated care systems. These strands are working closely together, and the result of this will be a strengthening of capacity and support for implementation, rather than establishing a separate body to take this on.

As outlined in its recently published strategy, NICE is revising its process for production and dissemination of guidelines, and is eager to ensure more digital health features and that these messages more consistently reach frontline NHS teams. This also links well to the work to clearly define standards for digital health products, as set out in the Digital Technology Assessment Criteria published by NHSX in February.

Thank you once again for writing about these important, and timely, opportunities to improve our healthcare system with the aid of modern technology.

Sir Patrick Vallance
Lord John Browne