Dear Colleague

Improving access and simplifying measurement

The NHS has made dramatic reductions in recent years in waits for care, which has been a key driver in record rates of public satisfaction with our services. We are determined to lock in that achievement, and go further cutting waits for other services, including mental health.

In doing so, we want to ensure that the way the key NHS Constitution standards are tracked makes sense for patients and does not give rise to unintended consequences. To that end I asked the NHS’ National Medical Director, Sir Bruce Keogh, to review how this is being done.

I attach the recommendations from Bruce’s review. In short, he recommends that all headline patient waiting times guarantees are retained. But he recommend that we rationalise the way we track Referral to Treatment times by now focusing on the one measure that tracks the complete patient experience - the so-called 'incomplete' standard. He also proposes to extend to further ambulance trusts the pilots proposed in the urgent and emergency care review.

Having considered these recommendations, and discussed them with the Secretary of State, we have decided to accept the recommendations in Bruce’s letter in full. Our aim is that these should take effect very quickly, and NHS England will be issuing operational implementation guidance shortly.

Yours sincerely

Simon Stevens
CEO, NHS England