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By email

7 February 2020

Dear Mary

Thank you for your letter of 16 January. I welcome the observations and findings of your report and share your eagerness to augment the power and influence of data and statistics in Adult Social Care. You rightly focus on three pertinent themes in your review, which I would like to offer initial responses to in turn:

Leadership and Collaboration. We acknowledge the Adult Social Care system is devolved and that several organisations have data and analysis roles within this system. I am encouraged by the collaborative culture that is developing in our Data Delivery Action Group (DDAG), which brings together a cross-section of such specialists from the Department of Health and Social care (DHSC), NHS Digital, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), The Local Government Authority (LGA) and the Care and Quality Commission (CQC). ONS colleagues have recently joined this group where we track progress towards statutory obligations and initiatives driven by the English Health Statistics Steering Group (EHSSG) and our *Four Nations* Group. We remain keen to bolster our links with other relevant peer organisations such as the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), NHS England, Public Health England and NHSX, with the ultimate shared vision of a stronger, representative delivery team to prioritise and address gaps in the provision of data and insight.

Data Gaps. You acknowledge in your report that Key Performance Indicators for Adult Social Care are notoriously difficult to summarise, given the informal and untracked nature of vast areas of care by family and friends, for example. Through our engagement with colleagues in Local Authorities (through our Annual National Workshops - the most recent of which we held in January) we understand the sizeable burden their teams are already under, just to collect currently mandated data in a way that adequately embraces our professional commitments to Quality, Trustworthiness and Value. We remain dedicated to exploring opportunities to augment and, where appropriate, refresh the suite of data collected and analysed in England. We strive to build multi-disciplinary teams at NHS Digital, where we treat collections and publications as 'customer-facing products', reducing and / or justifying burden and demonstrating real-world value. When our stakeholders tell us that value is diminishing, we will act swiftly to redirect effort to unmet needs.

We acknowledge the compelling case to keep pace with changes to delivery across the system. We will produce a new *Adult Social Care Summary Report* this Spring, in response to demand from our stakeholders; a step toward providing proportionate, insightful, cross-cutting summary insights that decision-makers can act on. We also plan to collaborate with other organisations in extending the *Client Level Data* initiative. By applying the processing power of our new *Data Processing Services* infrastructure at NHS Digital, we hope to enable users to enhance their ability to link data across health and care settings in a safe, robustly governed way, and to better tailor analytical products and insights to their own local needs.

Existing Statistics. In your letter you assert the need for greater investment in social care data and analysis. In addition, we all have a duty to seek out opportunities for incremental and continuous improvements in our existing products and operations. Not only are we collaborating across organisational boundaries in Adult Social Care, but also between all our experienced Analysis Teams within NHS Digital, to level up our statistical products. *Accessibility, Quality and Granularity* should feel consistent, regardless of the subject matter the user comes to NHS Digital for. By improving the flexibility and agility of our analysts, we hope to dynamically deploy people where and when they are needed, using more automated processing and publishing technologies to align publication *Timeliness* with user expectation. Through cross-system collaboration we are committed to aligning *Insight* to the highest priority needs of the user.

Most recommendations annexed in your letter are already in train, transparently tracked and governed through DDAG. I'd warmly welcome you as a guest to one of their meetings to see how we're getting on.

I would like to close by returning to Leadership and Collaboration. All organisations in scope of your review have a substantial, exciting and shared opportunity to make a bold difference to Adult Social Care by *pushing data (and its utility) to the front of the agenda*. I'm personally reassured we all share that vision, passion and urgency. The next sensible step is to coordinate, pool and utilise our expertise and resources for optimal effect and drive visible change, as well as setting out the opportunities that could be fulfilled with additional investment. The workshop you propose is an ideal way to initiate that.

Yours sincerely



Chris Roebuck
Chief Statistician