

**MINUTES OF A CALL WITH NHS ENGLAND AND NHS IMPROVEMENT NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS HELD ON TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2020 AT 6.15 PM AT SKIPTON HOUSE, 80 LONDON ROAD, LONDON SE1 6LH**

**Members:**

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**NHS Improvement**

Baroness Dido Harding	Chair
David Behan	Associate Non-Executive Director
Lord Patrick Carter	Non-Executive Director (by telephone)
Lord Ara Darzi	Non-Executive Director (by telephone)
Richard Douglas	Vice Chair (by telephone)
Andrew Morris	Non-Executive Director (by telephone)
Wol Kolade	Non-Executive Director
Laura Wade-Gery	Non-Executive Director (by telephone)

**NHS England**

Lord David Prior	Chair
Simon Stevens	NHS CEO
Noel Gordon	Non-Executive Director (by telephone)
David Roberts	Vice Chair (by telephone)
Joanne Shaw	Non-Executive Member (by telephone)

**In attendance:**

Sofia Bernsand	Head of Governance
Ninjeri Pandit	Director of the office of the NHS Chairs, CEO and COO

**1. Welcome and apologies**

- 1.1. Apologies for absence had been received from Professor Sir Munir Pirmohamed (Non-Executive Director, NHS England).

**2. Declarations of interest**

- 2.1. There were no declarations of interests.

**3. Update on the Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

- 3.1. The Chief Executive provided an update on developments during the last week and noted that the World Health Organisation had confirmed that the outbreak had reached pandemic status. The Government had, based on scientific advice, also announced a move to the 'delay' phase and in order to slow the advance of the epidemic and introduced a package of social distancing. Considerable efforts were being made by Government to secure more ventilators for the NHS and British manufacturing companies had been approached by the Prime Minister and asked to switch to making medical ventilators. A decision to postpone routine surgery had been made and negotiations to secure beds and get access to staff in private



hospitals was progressing. NHSE/I's instructions to the NHS had been issued in a letter from the CEO and COO earlier that day.

- 3.2. Pressures and capacity restraints on senior managers and other staff were considered. The Care Quality Commission had ceased all routine inspections and considerable efforts were being made internally to free up internal resources and redeploy staff to coronavirus priority areas.
- 3.3. A discussion took place on intensive care and high dependency unit capacity and the efforts being made to increase bed capacity. The modelling by SAGE of the expected peak of the epidemic was considered. It was clear from the independent modelling that no country's health system would be able to cope effectively unless appropriate public measures were taken to reduce the infection rate.
- 3.4. The issue of current total testing capacity and the timetable for considerably increasing this capacity was discussed. DHSC were in the lead on both this and PPE availability. The reagent issues were noted and the importance of prioritising testing of NHS and social care staff once the testing capacity had been increased was stressed.
- 3.5. Social distancing measures and the importance that the population responded to the measures was highlighted. Although acknowledging that the organisations were not responsible for issuing guidelines, the Non-Executive Directors noted the importance of ensuring that Government guidelines outlined in very simple lay terms what each measure entailed. It was noted that considerable efforts were being made to establish the level of care normally provided to individuals in the high-risk categories and consider how care could appropriately be provided during the social distancing period.
- 3.6. The pressures on the social care sector were discussed. The need to ensure the social care sector was included in the Government's planning was stressed.
- 3.7. Challenges around personal protection equipment (PPE) was noted. Issues had arisen around supply and local distribution, which DHSC were addressing.
- 3.8. It was noted that NHS Digital had been informed of a material increase in the number of, although largely unsophisticated, cyber attacks.
- 3.9. The Non-Executive Directors expressed their gratitude for all the hard work and efforts made by the senior managers and their teams in supporting the NHS during these unprecedented times. Consideration would be given to ensuring the teams could remain resilient over the coming months.

#### **4. Any other business**

- 4.1. There was no other business.