

James Blyth

Deputy Director - Local Government Stewardship,  
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Dear James,

**Re: Croydon Council and the suggestion for Commissioners**

As a close partner of Croydon Council, the trust and wider health team in place, wanted to write to set out our views on the recent suggestion for commissioners to be appointed due to concerns about the delivery against the hugely significant financial challenge in the borough. We fully appreciate the gravity of the situation and indeed the need for a resolution. Whilst we are not best qualified to make detailed technical points about the specifics of the financial position or directly input to the final decision of ministers, we felt it was important to set out our support for the work already done by the council and commit to working with them going forward.

We have worked consistently with the council over many years as part of the innovative One Croydon Alliance and have seen Katherine's letter to you explaining their position. From our perspective, we agree that there has been very significant progress made over the past few years and that this has been done in a way that drives financial improvement whilst maintaining a service provision and strong and positive working relationships locally. This in turn has allowed us to continue our drive to more integrated working to benefit the population we both serve. With the government's desire to implement a neighbourhood health service we are very keen that this approach is maintained.

Crucial to this work overall is an agreed position regarding the drivers of the financial deficit and whilst there are further efficiencies and improvements that can and will be made, it is clear to us that there is more to the problem and solution than that. We cannot definitively comment on the specific points made but it is clear from the work the Council have done and that we have been involved in, that they have made real progress and as ever, there is more that can and will be done by the council alone and with partners. We are fully committed to continuing to be active in this process and to making our contribution, but if the council have to resolve the challenge by going further faster locally without national financial support we believe this is less likely to be successful. Moreover, we believe it could cause real issues for residents in terms of service availability and quality as well as negative impacts for staff and our ability to work together as partners. Ultimately this could mean we are less able to develop the more integrated health and care service we want and need to for our borough.

We also agree that further external support building on the excellent input that has been provided by the panel thus far is also crucial but for that to be through commissioners could, if not managed carefully, delay some of the work in hand or planned and ultimately make delivery of financial sustainability harder.

To this end and in summary, we fully appreciate the gravity of the situation and the imperative to address it at pace, creating a sustainable future. We also support the principles within the council's suggested next steps of an independent financial assessment, the establishment of an External Assurance Board, involving sector-led oversight whilst maintaining and strengthening existing financial assurance mechanisms: with a 'non-statutory improvement adviser'

We hope this is useful and if you would like to talk to us about any of the points made or have other questions, we would be very happy to discuss that as part of the final deliberations of Ministers and officials.

Yours sincerely



**Yemisi Gibbons**

Trust Chair

Croydon Health Services NHS Trust



**Matthew Kershaw**

Chief Executive and Place Based Leader for Health

Croydon Health Services NHS Trust