

Steve Brine MP
Health and Social Care Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

7 November 2022

Dear Chair,

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee. On behalf of everyone at the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) and our members, I wish you every success in your new role, at a particularly critical time for the UK's economy, as well as our health and care systems.

The REC speaks for over 3,000 recruitment and staffing businesses, who place a million workers into permanent roles every year, and a million workers into workplaces as temps every day. Over 500 of these members are staffing partners of the NHS or the social care sector. This includes the ten biggest staff suppliers to the NHS along with hundreds of SMEs who provide clinical and non-clinical professionals to NHS Trusts and local authorities, as well as to the private sector. They supply valuable permanent and flexible workers across all bands and services. What unites them is their commitment to robust compliance standards (as required as part of REC membership), and their dedication to providing 24/7 high quality staffing solutions to the NHS and the wider social care sector in the most efficient way possible for taxpayers.

Our members have a key role to play in addressing NHS backlogs and supporting staff development in both social care and health. We would like to work with you and the Committee on this – elevating staff planning from a procurement function to a strategic one. This is essential to retaining and attracting substantive staff and building temporary staff models that are sustainable and of high quality. Too often, the taxpayer ends up paying more, because frameworks and approaches designed to control costs are inoperable in our tight labour market. This leads to high-cost emergency options, when more sustainable approaches might have been taken at an earlier stage. We would like to work with you to put these better value, higher quality solutions in place.

We also want to help the NHS with flexible employment for staff. As outlined by the Committee under your predecessor's leadership, the NHS is faced with the greatest workforce crisis in its history. And key factors behind that is lack of flexibility, staff burnout, working conditions and mental health. This is something that the REC's members have expertise on. Temporary workers often make a conscious career choice to work via an agency full-time. The number one factor is the flexibility this pattern of employment offers, enabling people to choose their own shifts and fulfil other commitment, according to data from NHS Digital.

The REC's healthcare membership is spread across the UK, covers all disciplines and includes agencies of all size. This provides a national and regional understanding of the workforce, and we are keen to share this with you. Together, we would like to help you look at long-term, sustainable solutions on issues like staff shortages in the NHS and workforce planning. I enclose a further briefing document which provides more data on the state of the health and social care labour market and our suggestions for collaborating with you on long-term workforce planning to help deliver your priorities.

We look forward to working with you. It would be great to have the opportunity to meet with you, to discuss how we can further support you and the Committee at this critical time. Ellie (ellie.goddard@rec.uk.com) in my office would be happy to arrange a meeting at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Neil Carberry
Chief Executive