



Department of Health & Social Care

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The Rt Hon Dame Eleanor Laing MP
House of Commons
London
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22 July 2021

Dear Eleanor,

As you are aware, earlier this year, DHSC asked NHS England to set out options for boundary alignment in NHS integrated care systems (ICS) in specific geographies where upper-tier local authorities currently have to work across more than one ICS footprint and to assess the impact of alignment, and any possible changes, in each case.

The review has been approached with a presumption of moving towards coterminosity for ICS' with one or more upper tier Local Authority, save for in the most exceptional circumstances where strong reasons, by exception, can be demonstrated.

Over the last six months NHS England has actively engaged with stakeholders, across local authorities, the NHS and Primary Care in the region to hear local system views, in order to provide advice and analysis on the options for each of the affected areas to the Secretary of State. Alongside this I have met with you and other affected parliamentary colleagues to discuss ICS boundaries and ensure your views were considered in the final decision. I want to thank your engagement on this subject, the Secretary of State and I both found it invaluable; and your insights helped to shape this final decision.

This review has now concluded, and a final decision has been taken for the areas in scope of the review. In taking this decision the Secretary of State took into account the analysis provided by NHS England, all written and oral representations made to Ministers and the Department as well as considering his statutory duties including those on health inequalities and the public sector equality duties.

As set out at the beginning of the process the principle underpinning these decisions was one of moving to coterminous boundaries, with a non-coterminous status quo being maintained only in exceptional circumstances.

Given your representations, you will be pleased to know that the East of England region has been identified as one of these exceptions and the decision has been made by the Secretary of State to exempt this area from the principle of coterminosity. Therefore, no changes will be made to the existing boundaries of Norfolk and Waveney ICS, Suffolk and North East Essex ICS, Mid and South Essex ICS or Hertfordshire and West Essex ICS.

A number of factors were considered when taking this decision and the Secretary of State and I have listened to the important points you and colleagues have raised regarding the great progress being made by Mid and South Essex ICS, Hertfordshire and West Essex, Suffolk and North East Essex ICS and Norfolk and Waveney ICS in developing strong

relationships and delivering high standards of integration, including the considerable progress already being made to integrate services at a local level.

The Secretary of State also took on board the comments raised in the recent Adjournment debate held on this issue, as well as the roundtables that were undertaken with parliamentarians about different types of local authorities in the East of England region and their representation in the potential proposed new boundaries for ICSs.

As we move towards the next stage of ICS development, it will be important that a collaborative effort is made to ensure that the appropriate changes are made to system working to ensure stronger relationships can be developed with Local Authority partners in this region. Given the pragmatic, people-centred approach that local areas, individuals and organisations have taken in their contributions to the review, I am confident that this is possible.

I once again want to thank you for your invaluable engagement on this issue and hope we can continue to work together to provide more integrated health and care services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Argar', written over a light blue horizontal line.

EDWARD ARGAR MP