Thank you for the opportunity to speak to yourself and the Health Select Committee on 19 April 2016. As Specialists who work in large NHS providers, in addition to the very significant difference we make in integrating support for behaviour change e.g. smoking, use of alcohol into clinical care and improving staff healthcare, there is one additional point we wanted to raise around Specialist Public Health Practice in the NHS ('Healthcare Public Health'), which we understand the Committee may have considered already, but this is from an NHS Provider perspective and is impacted by the Health Care Act and its attendant organisational change.

You will remember the definition the Faculty of Public Health submitted:

Short headline definition of Healthcare Public Health

Healthcare Public Health is one of the three core domains of Specialist Public Health practice, alongside Health Improvement and Health Protection. Healthcare Public Health (HCPH) is concerned with maximising the population benefits of healthcare while meeting the needs of individuals and groups, by prioritizing available resources, by preventing diseases and by improving health-related outcomes through design, access, utilisation and evaluation of effective and efficient healthcare interventions and pathways of care.

One of the consequences of the 2012 reforms, as you have heard, is the reduction of, and pressures on, Specialist Public Health staff. This applies particularly to those whose technical skills support, and sometimes can lead efforts to make the NHS 'Better Value'. Depending on where those Public Health staff are located, their influence and leadership is mediated through the most efficient and effective design of patient pathways, their commissioning, or their provision from prevention through to tertiary care.

As NHS providers, we know the real value of our own Trusts non-Public Health clinical Consultants in being integral to the design and delivery of better NHS care. Our experience is that without Specialist Public Health staff who are close by and familiar with the NHS, it is more difficult to truly empower and engage non-Public Health colleagues in pathway and best value work.

This reduces overall system effectiveness and can lead to mixed messages based on different information. Examples of how Public Health expertise can influence non-Public Health colleagues' decisions are the interpretation of data sources such as those from the excellent 'Variation in Healthcare Atlas'. This work often requires the application of significant technical epidemiology and evaluation skills to make effective changes for patient benefit. Doing that, in turn, empowers colleagues to make better decisions at policy and patient level. One way to demonstrate the value of this Public Health input is to pose a simple question (which could apply to any medical condition) such as:

"Are the 300 patients with COPD the Specialist sees in their clinic annually the 300 from the local area most in need of their expertise?"

Answering this requires Healthcare Public Health Specialists to work across the whole system to raise awareness that this is legitimate territory for provider clinicians and teams, empower those teams to become involved in policy-level decisions and support the development and implementation of those decisions. In our experience, local health systems rarely have the capacity available in Local Authority Public Health teams to accomplish this and much of the capacity for it has been retained at more strategic levels, far removed from where patients are seen.

And yet the imperatives of the '5 Year Forward View', which we wholeheartedly support, demand exactly this kind of local transformation of thinking and will. We very much hope that because of this, you will consider how we can better develop and maintain Healthcare Public Health capacity. We remain convinced this can only be achieved by strengthening or mandating defined Healthcare Public Health roles in Council Public Health teams; through PHE local and CCG commissioning teams, and; by growing and spreading further Public Health specialist skills in NHS provider units.

31 May 2016