

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The Hon. Member for Douglas Central, Mr Thomas, to ask The Minister for Health and Social Care:

How the Health Services Consultative Committee, professional representative bodies, the Manx Care Board and staff, healthcare contractors, healthcare charities, tertiary providers, other stakeholders and the public have been, and will be, engaged in the healthcare review.

Question W-202501-1581 published on 25 04 2025; Answer published on 09 05 2025.

The Minister for Health and Social Care (Ms Christian):

The resolution of Tynwald in October 2024¹ in respect of Health Service Reform (“the resolution”) had four areas of review and I am grateful for the Honourable Member’s question to allow an update on progress and engagement to date.

The first part of the resolution was a review the operation of the current legislation with a view to amending or replacing existing legislation to provide the opportunity for further reform and clarify the governance and division of responsibilities of the Department of Health and Social Care and Manx Care. The Department has carefully reviewed the operation of the Manx Care Act 2021 and identified areas which may benefit from amendment or replacement to provide the opportunity for further reform and clarify the governance and division of responsibilities between the Department and Manx Care.

We have used the Department’s ongoing engagement on the new Health and Social Care Bill to support that review. This engagement has included:

- A dedicated Steering Group comprising representatives from across Manx Care;
- Representatives from the Adult Social Work Team;
- The Health and Social Care Consultative Committee;
- The Mental Health Commission;
- The Health and Social Care Ombudsman; and
- Public consultation (on the Health and Care Services Bill).

Active engagement is a cornerstone of legislative development and is a key focus in all plans to amend or replace legislation.

¹ <https://www.tynwald.org.im/spfile?file=/business/vp/VP/2024-PP-0119.pdf>

The Department is also reviewing existing governance and accountability structures as part of the Transformation Programme's Governance and Accountability Project. This is considering reports and reviews that have recommended improvements to clarify governance and division of responsibilities. These reviews and reports involved engagement with direct stakeholders.

The second part of the resolution asked Council of Ministers to ensure the current frameworks within Manx Care and DHSC are reviewed so that healthcare professions are fully engaged to secure continuous improvement of healthcare. As set out in the Mandate and Operating Plan, Manx Care have engaged with staff and professional representative bodies and, following on from feedback, will bring into operation a revised Management Structure which establishes a Clinical Senate as a sub-committee of the Manx Care Board to enhance governance and service quality. The Clinical Senate will enable a wide range of professionals to directly advise the Manx Care Board - including Allied Health professionals, Social Workers and nurses, as well as doctors. I have committed to ensuring information on the re-structure is provided to Honourable Members and Manx Care will publish further details in due course.

The third part of the resolution was directed to Council of Ministers to undertake a review of how the Executive members of Manx Care are appointed and employed, including how individual performance is assessed, managed and reviewed on an annual basis.

These all deal with improvements that could be made to the existing structures to improve governance, accountability and ensuring that health and care professionals are fully engaged in continuous improvement of health and care services.

The final part of the resolution was to undertake a review of how the operation of Schedule 1 of the Manx Care Act 2021 has worked in practice, in particular the membership of the board, with a view to whether political representation on the board is required. Conversations with colleagues across Tynwald, Manx Care, Council of Ministers, senior officers and other key stakeholders have highlighted some views that the current model creates unnecessary tensions between the Department and Manx Care. Some say that more direct accountability from our publicly-funded health and care service to Tynwald – and therefore the public - may be desirable.

One of the consequences of the Manx Care Act of 2021 was the separation of the roles and responsibilities of the former Department of Health and Social Care into different places – Manx Care with a focus on operational delivery, and the new Department of Health and Social Care with a focus on policy, legislation, registration and inspection.

On 1 April 2021, nearly 99% of the staff in the old Department of Health and Social Care woke up to find themselves working for a new statutory board, Manx Care. The other 40 or so people left behind found themselves working for the Department as it is today.

These seismic changes to the way our health and care system is organised and managed were carried out at pace and are a testament to the hard work of all involved. However, the purpose of these changes and the benefits they were intended to bring have been hard for many people on the outside to feel, follow and understand.

Everyone on this Island cares passionately about us having a well-functioning, efficient and affordable healthcare system that provides the right care to those in need, the length and breadth of the Isle of Man.

In the here and now, we need to reassure the public that the most efficient and productive systems and working relationships are in place, considered without ego for the betterment of our Island and its people. The work outlined above is vital in ensuring our current structures and process work effectively.

However, I believe from recent conversations and debates that now is the moment to allow some space to properly consider how the relationship between this Honourable Court, the Department and Manx Care is working and what – if anything – more fundamentally needs to change. Ultimately, we need to ensure that the people of this Island are the recipients of a health and care system that hits the mark for all concerned.

There are differing views on how we should move forward. This includes on the question of democratic accountability and whether there should be political representation on the Manx Care Board, and indeed whether Manx Care and the Department should remain separate. It is important that any decision made on such an important matter be backed by a clear evidence base for change, and fulsome engagement.

The original timescales envisaged for the reviews meant that wider stakeholder and public engagement would be limited. Therefore, engagement with key stakeholders has been early scoping and preparatory work to date. Recognising the importance of inclusive engagement, the views to date, and the need for an evidence-based review of the relationship between the Department and Manx Care, the Department is committed to expanding our engagement work in the coming months and developing an engagement plan that includes:

- Holding dedicated engagement sessions with the Manx Care Board, staff, healthcare contractors, and tertiary providers to understand operational challenges and opportunities for improvement;
- Holding dedicated engagement sessions with Tynwald Members;
- Inviting input from professional representative bodies and healthcare union staff side representatives;

- Increasing third sector and public involvement through a series of community listening events and targeted consultations; and
- Direct consultation with HSCC.

This work will help ensure that all relevant voices – from clinicians to carers, charities to citizens and Honourable Members – are meaningfully engaged in shaping the future of health and care on the Island.

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