

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU



Dear Secretary of State

We are writing to ask you to commit to action in the NHS People Plan to end the children's palliative care workforce crisis.

UK children's palliative care charity Together for Short Lives has uncovered a growing shortage of skilled children's palliative care professionals across England. This has reached crisis point: there are too few NHS community children's nurses, specialist consultants in paediatric palliative medicine, children's hospice nurses and allied health professionals who have the skills and experience needed to provide this crucial care.

This is leading to seriously ill children and their families losing out on vital care and support. Too many children with life-limiting conditions and their families are unable to receive the round the clock care packages they need, while others are missing out on vital short breaks for respite.

The NHS Long Term Plan identifies children's palliative care is an important priority for the NHS. However, the NHS can only prioritise it if there are enough people with the skills and experience to provide it. We ask you act to end the crisis by making sure the following measures are included in the NHS People Plan:

1. Urgently assess the gaps in the children's palliative care workforce. This should include specifically assessing the demand for professionals from children's hospice organisations and the independent sector and including this in Health Education England planning models.
2. Develop a core skills education and training framework for children's palliative care; this could help employers to identify key skills for roles and teams, conduct training needs analysis and plan, design and commission appropriate levels of and systems for training. Health Education England has published one for adult palliative care, but not children.
3. NHS England and NHS Improvement specialised commissioning team and Health Education England should urgently fund NHS trusts to create specific medical training posts. This would help to make sure that paediatric palliative care special interest training (SPIN) can take place.

Children's palliative care services are struggling with a dangerous mix of growing staff shortages and rising caseloads. Time is short for many seriously ill children and their families. They cannot wait any longer. We ask that the NHS People Plan sets out a programme to boost the number of professionals working with these children in the NHS and voluntary sector, in hospitals, children's hospices and the community.

Yours sincerely