

## Words Matter



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As the reshuffle continues – there has been a lot of noise about the expanded title of Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP. Social care commentators have been rightly outraged by the notion that the new ‘Secretary of State for Health and Social Care’ has been given an expanded brief – as social care always sat within the departmental responsibilities. Yes – well I knew that – and you knew that – but it seems that out in the wider world there was an awful lot of people who either didn’t know, or had chosen to forget the fact. So – how do we make the name count in the coming months of change.

Having spent a lot of time in the last year working with colleagues at NHS Digital (the relatively recent re brand for the previous Health and Social Care Information Centre) and constantly feeling that social care is a very last minute addition to the guest list, I think that the presence of social care in the departmental title will be an important statement for those inside and outside Richmond House. The fact that commentators are embracing this for its ‘newness’ presents an opportunity for increased accountability and analysis of the role of the Jeremy Hunt and his team, alongside the work of the newly named Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Of course, it would be extraordinarily naïve not to focus on some of the risks that this new focus might bring. We are in the midst of a well-documented crisis in the provision of care within hospitals and other acute settings, and social care is seen as one of the barriers, as well as one of the solutions. There is no sign of the storm abating, and new concerns about increases in flu levels are only going to exacerbate pressures. However, therein lies one of the possible benefits of being more visibly ‘in the camp’ rather than suffering the Cinderella syndrome that many in social care feel has existed to date. The saga surrounding whether care workers would or wouldn’t receive flu jabs, and how they would access them could be a useful case study in examining whether the department begins to see this through the lens of a system led approach, or continues to perpetuate [the silos](#) that are currently deeply embedded within our local and national architecture.

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