



Department
of Health

From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health

POC_1003614

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Dear Mark,

Thank you for your letter last week.

Achieving a negotiated solution on the junior doctors' contract has been my objective from the outset. We have always been willing to talk without preconditions, and we have extended numerous invitations to do so both publicly and privately. I am disappointed by the BMA's continued refusal to take up that offer, particularly given we have already been through one independent process with the DDRB, and you have not yet even been willing to discuss their recommendations with us.

Patient safety has been my absolute priority throughout my tenure as Health Secretary. The extreme strike action planned in December poses a serious threat to that safety. Whilst I believe the right thing to do is to return to the negotiating table directly, it is clear that any talks are better than strikes, so in the first instance I am very happy for my officials and NHS Employers to commence those talks using ACAS conciliation services.

We have already been through one independent process since our negotiations began nearly three years ago. We are now embarking upon a second. The Government has just committed an extra £3.8bn to the NHS next year to help fund the NHS' own plan for the future and deliver better services every day of the week. Extra taxpayers' money must come with reform, so I hope you will appreciate that it is vital that we now press ahead with changes to the consultants and junior contracts to help tackle unacceptable variations in weekend mortality rates by improving medical cover at weekends, which is a key part of the solution. My strong

preference is to get round the table and agree with the BMA how we do so in a way that you consider fair, and we are willing to listen and negotiate on any concerns.

Given we will shortly be commencing with ACAS our first negotiations in over a year, I would also urge you to think again about whether extreme strike action in the NHS' busiest period - which will at best disrupt patient care and at worst cause serious harm to patients - is appropriate or necessary. I believe it's time to work together to improve weekend care – as promised to the British people in our election manifesto - and avoid harming vulnerable patients by postponing your planned action and resolving our differences through talks not strikes.

Yes and

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeremy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

JEREMY HUNT

Cc: Dr Johann Malawana – Chair Junior Doctors' Committee