



Department  
of Health

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

Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2NS

POC\_1014618

020 7210 4850

Dr Mark Porter  
BMA Council Chair  
BMA House  
Tavistock Square  
London  
WC1H 9JP

*Dr Mark,*

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry to learn that the BMA will proceed with strike action for 24 hours from 10 February, which will inevitably cause disruption for patients and see procedures cancelled.

Sir David Dalton has updated me on the progress of the negotiations and I enclose a copy of his latest assessment. You will see that he agrees with you that the only significant remaining issues to be resolved relate to pay and the extent of plain time working hours. The Government and NHS Employers made a significant offer on the extent of plain time and stood ready to discuss these matters and it is very disappointing that the BMA felt unable to negotiate. As you know, our clear objective - and one which doctors share - is to improve the standard of care for patients at weekends.

Our door remains open and I hope that you will continue to reflect on the value of further discussions. In particular, I would welcome your assurance that you are willing to discuss plain time working hours, as set out in the joint agreement with ACAS in November.

I hope that we will be able to deliver a new contract as soon as possible, as David suggests, for the benefit of the health service.

*Yours ever*

**JEREMY HUNT**