Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

22 November 2016

Dear Chancellor,

The BMA has consistently highlighted the shortfall in NHS funding and the impact this has on the delivery of patient care. At present the NHS is barely coping with unprecedented rising patient demand against a backdrop of crippling financial restraint. These issues have most recently come to light in the development of NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs) which have now shown to total £22 billion worth of cuts to local services.

The BMA has been tracking the progress and development of STPs since their announcement and we are increasingly worried that their primary focus is not on delivering the best possible patient care, but on cutting back budgets and, therefore, services. For them to be successful they must have the confidence of clinicians, patients and the public and be drawn up in an open and transparent way. Unfortunately, we simply do not have the confidence that this is happening.

From the plans publically available, we know that some plans cut hospital beds, close A&E departments, and restructure maternity services without the necessary evidence to show that these will either save money or improve quality. Given the precarious state of hospital finances, we cannot afford to be taking these risks.

As we have seen in the debate over NHS funding in recent weeks, many existing services are already at risk of financial collapse. The cuts to public health and pressures on social care budgets are exacerbating the crisis further and significantly impacting on the provision of patient care. Our concern is that the process through which STPs have been created, and the fact that the focus of STPs appears to be achieving financial balance and cutting budgets rather than improving quality, is only going to worsen the financial situation within the NHS. In turn this will intensify the current debate around NHS finances.
Whilst we appreciate the need for the NHS to be financially sustainable, it is essential that this does not come at the expense of patient care. Ahead of the Autumn Statement I am, therefore, calling on you as Chancellor to commit the necessary upfront funding to properly finance the NHS.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Mark Porter
BMA council chair