Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Gosport Independent Panel – Government response

I listened with interest to your recent statement, in the House of Commons, regarding the Government’s response to the Gosport Independent Panel and your wider announcements on protection for whistleblowers, the introduction of Medical Examiners and work to promote a culture shift towards learning across the NHS.

We are pleased to see the announcement of new legislation to compel NHS trusts to report annually on how concerns raised by staff have been addressed and the exploration of further measures to better protect whistleblowers. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further as well as to explore other measures for promoting learning across the NHS.

As you will know, the BMA recently launched the results of a landmark survey, Caring, supportive, collaborative: a future vision for the NHS, in which nearly 8,000 doctors from across the UK shared their views on working in the NHS, and which is attached. Our findings show that just 48% of doctors always feel confident in raising concerns about patient care, with 55% citing the reason as a fear of being unfairly blamed for errors which are due to pressures or system failings in the workplace. Furthermore, 51% of doctors believe there is insufficient protection and support for those reporting errors.

I would also like to draw your attention to the BMA’s bullying and harassment project. Directly influenced by worrying member feedback, the project aims to highlight the impact that bullying, and harassment has had on the working lives and wellbeing of doctors, and the growing evidence of how it harms patient care and safety. Launched earlier this month, our new report is a reflection of what we have learned. It sets out key issues, practical recommendations for change and sits alongside the development of resources and tools for doctors experiencing bullying or harassment, such as counselling services and eLearning modules.
The events of Gosport were shocking and impacted profoundly on both the nation and those of us who have dedicated our careers to promoting health and wellbeing and who work to give the best possible care and support to all our patients. We support the Government’s response and the drive outlined in your statement to ensure lessons are learned and practices changed as a result of that learning. Doctors must be at the heart of that process, and the BMA would welcome the opportunity to contribute to this policy development, informed by the extensive work I have highlighted above.

I’d be happy to discuss this in more detail when we meet.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Chaand Nagpaul CBE
BMA council chair