2 July 2016

Dear Mark

The Prime Minister has asked me to respond to your letter to him of 30 June.

The British people have voted to leave the European Union and I have been clear that we must accept that decision and the challenges it brings, not least in the short term whilst a new relationship with Europe is determined. This is the beginning of a long process and all matters will be considered carefully in due course.

However they voted, the British people expect continuity and stability in public life – nowhere more so than in terms of our NHS, something we all depend on and the most highly valued and loved public service of all. That is why I have said directly to the 110,000 EU workers in our health and care system – you do a brilliant job for your patients, you are a crucial part of our NHS, and as a country we value you. Ten per cent of our doctors, and more than 20,000 NHS nurses, are from another EU country, and we simply could not do without their contribution. As Professor Sir Bruce Keogh has rightly said, we all must now do everything we can to ensure our whole workforce feels secure – because that is the only way we will ensure we can deliver high-quality care for all.

This Government has prioritised health and invested an extra £10 billion in the NHS’s own plan for the future. We recognise parts of the NHS are under pressure as demand rises due to our ageing population so we are providing intensive support to improve performance, boost efficiency and reduce the use of expensive agency staff. Any future decisions on further funding for the NHS are a matter for the next Prime Minister.

JEREMY HUNT