

Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care

Sent via email

22 May 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to inform you that, as of today, the BMA UK Consultants Committee and UK Specialist, Associate Specialist and Specialty Doctors Committee are re-entering into dispute with the Government in light of your inflammatory decision regarding this year's pay award. We urge you to commence urgent and immediate negotiations with us to revise your position – in the meantime, we have no choice but to reinstate the rate cards for consultants and SAS doctors, which we had agreed to stop promoting as a show of good faith in last year's deal.

We do not take this decision lightly, but the award does not even meet current RPI inflation, let alone make any meaningful effort to redress the 26% and 24% pay cuts that consultants and SAS doctors in England have respectively experienced since 2008/09. Senior doctors are, in effect, working three months of every year for free. Based on your decision regarding this year's uplift, on this current trajectory no present consultant will attain pay restoration during their working lives. This is wholly unacceptable.

We are all acutely aware that the NHS workforce faces a perfect storm of senior doctors choosing to retire earlier, a significant proportion approaching retirement age, and a growing trend of younger doctors walking away from their career. Clearly, every senior doctor has become more precious than ever – recruitment and retention of the NHS's clinical leaders is crucial to the success of continuing to deliver safe patient care and to delivering on the Government's ambitious target to reduce backlogs.

So, you must understand that your decision – at this critical juncture when you had the opportunity to show commitment to our deal – signals the exact opposite. It says to consultants and SAS doctors that the Government simply does not value their hard work. Certainly, you do not appear to appreciate the significance of the reforms to the independent pay review process that were agreed with the BMA to end unprecedented strike action.

To the contrary, the Government has shown an apparent disregard for our reforms to the pay review process since the beginning of this round – in its remit letter to the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body (DDRB), it sought to unfairly constrain the pay review body's thinking [by](#)

Chief executive officers: Neeta Major & Rachel Podolak

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[referencing affordability](#) and the broader economic context, despite the terms of last year's deal.

A truly independent DDRB would have fully taken into account, as per the terms of our deal, the need to consider long-term pay cuts, comparisons with other professions and what doctors are paid overseas, and the need to recruit, retain, and motivate doctors in England. This is what was promised to consultants and SAS doctors and has clearly not been delivered.

Restoring faith in our pay review process was a pivotal factor in consultants' unprecedented strike action – during the dispute, the most common reason cited for consultants rejecting the first government offer in January 2024 was that they felt that DDRB reforms did not go far enough.

This year has been seen as a litmus test for the effectiveness of a reformed pay review body. Needless to say, it has failed. As a consequence, we demand that the current membership of the DDRB resign, having demonstrated themselves unable to fulfil their role effectively or command the trust of the profession.

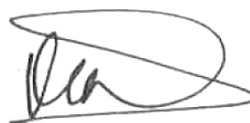
Your government has been keen to claim early success in bringing down NHS waiting lists, but this is largely down to the efforts of doctors and their colleagues. Now, you risk completely undermining any such progress by telling the NHS's most senior and experienced clinicians that it does not value them or care to retain them. It is patients who this derisory decision on pay will, ultimately, affect – when the NHS can no longer recruit and retain its mostly highly skilled doctors and clinical leaders.

It is not too late. We are ready to begin negotiations to secure a better outcome for senior doctors and patients – but if we are not able to find a resolution, we cannot rule out more industrial action. It is in no-one's interests for this matter to escalate and we remain committed to working together to avoid this outcome.

Yours sincerely



Dr Helen Neary
Co-chair, BMA consultants committee



Dr Shanu Datta
Co-chair, BMA consultants committee



Dr Ujjwala Mohite
Chair, BMA SAS committee