

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

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

Sent via email

03 September 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Following the publication of the DDRB's 49th Report, and subsequent engagement with our membership, we are writing to convey the extreme dissatisfaction of consultants in England with the Review Body's recommendations and the subsequent pay uplift. This follows a period of over a decade which has seen the estimated take home pay of the average consultant fall by over 28% since 2008.

Following the pay award, a staggering 91% of consultants feel that the Government does not value the work consultants have done or are expected to do over the coming year. Given the severe waiting list concerns, action must be taken to re-engage, motivate, and value the clinical leaders of the NHS.

We have previously communicated with the Review Body and the DHSC (Department of Health and Social Care) to express our significant concerns about the independence of the Review Body and the extent to which it evidently continues to feel constrained by political direction. The DDRB was originally formed to provide an independent mechanism for the setting of doctors' and dentists' remuneration in order to avoid disputes between government and the profession, and to ensure that doctors' and dentists' standard of living was not depressed by 'arbitrary government action'.

Clearly, the current process is now far removed from the original remit of the DDRB, and doctors' pay is subject to undue political interference. Between 2010/11 and 2017/18, a period of eight years, the Government directed the DDRB that doctors' pay should be frozen or that any pay rise be capped at 1%. This was despite inflation (RPI) running at an average of 3.1% per year during that period. This arbitrary government action has clearly depressed doctors' standard of living and runs counter to the founding principles of the DDRB. Is therefore unsurprising that consultants in England have lost faith in the current pay review process.

No process can be considered independent where the parameters of review can be set arbitrarily by government; the membership of the Review Body is selected solely by government; the final reports can be held by government indefinitely, without being released to the profession; and the recommendations are not binding on government. Furthermore, despite repeatedly highlighting the impact of pay erosion and of pensions taxation on the standard of living, recruitment, and retention of doctors, the DDRB maintains that these matters are outside of its remit. Having not been reviewed for a significant period of time, a further review of the terms of reference of the DDRB is also overdue.

Chief executive officer: Tom Grinyer



Consultants have completely lost faith in the pay review process and the BMA believes that there is an urgent need to reform the DDRB to restore it to its original purpose, autonomy, and authority. We are requesting that you meet with us in the coming weeks to discuss the restitution of the DDRB, so that it is once again able to operate in accordance with the principles on which it was first established.

Clearly, the BMA wishes to avoid a dispute with government, and it is essential that you engage with us to discuss a way forward. Consultants in England have decided that they will not be engaging with the pay review body process this year in its current form, and it is essential that the pay review body process is reformed to restore faith amongst consultants that their pay will be treated fairly in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V Sharma', with a checkmark at the end.

Dr Vishal Sharma
BMA consultants committee chair