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Rt Hon Liz Truss MP
Prime Minister
No 10 Downing Street

Sent via email

05 September 2022

Dear Ms Truss,

Congratulations on your election to leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

During your campaign, I wrote to you on behalf of doctors across the UK to highlight the extreme pressures which the medical workforce and health services face. Record waiting times, ambulances stacking up outside A+Es, patients unable to be discharged to overwhelmed community and social care services and GPs caring for more patients than ever before. All while staff numbers continue to plummet.

The shockingly regular headlines on the state of the NHS do not do justice to the scale of the challenge we face in providing the standard of care expected to our patients. I would urge you not to see this problem from Whitehall, or through sanitised visits, but to share the experience of NHS staff and witness the reality in primary care and in hospitals across the UK. You would see the lengths that staff go to on a daily basis, in the face of crippling staff shortages, while taking the unenviable decisions over which patient to prioritise and which to leave waiting in distress. Our GPs and their teams are bearing the brunt of excessive waiting times while many are themselves overwhelmed with demand. Urgent attention must be given to relieving this pressure and providing the required support to primary care.

Since my own election as Chair of BMA Council, I have spoken consistently of the intense feeling of demoralisation amongst the medical workforce. This is a workforce that stood up to the challenge of the pandemic, that went above and beyond to continue caring for patients and to deliver the lifesaving vaccination programme, but is now being taken entirely for granted by the Government. You have an opportunity to right that wrong. The recent pay award was, in reality, nothing more than another pay cut. Junior doctors, GP partners and a significant proportion of staff and associate specialist (SAS) doctors have all been held to multi-year deals agreed in good faith prior to the pandemic. The impact of the decision to exclude them from pay awards given to their colleagues hardly needs explaining.

Co-chief executive officers: Neeta Major & Rachel Podolak

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To hold junior doctors for the second year running to a pay deal agreed before the pandemic and before spiralling inflation hit, is simply callous. Junior doctors will put up with this no more and are on a collision course with the Government unless commitments are made to restore their levels of pay. We have put this to the Department of Health and Social Care and I hope that you will instruct your new Government to work with the BMA to head off the reality of industrial action by fairly recognising the contribution of junior doctors.

The BMA does not believe the current process for setting doctors' pay, through the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB), is fit for purpose and it requires significant reform. A fair process would not have allowed doctors' pay to be eroded so significantly.


We acknowledged your commitment to "sort out" the problems with NHS pensions which are driving senior doctors from the NHS in their droves when we need them most. The scale of this problem cannot be underestimated. However, suspending "retire and return" restrictions is just one small part of the problem and will have minimal impact on the overall numbers of doctors leaving as it will only help a small minority of doctors who hold mental health officer status. It will not address the problems faced by GPs or the majority of consultants. To suggest otherwise and that this is the solution would be disingenuous.

The BMA has been warning of the impact that punitive pension taxation rules are having on the NHS for years. The backlog of care cannot be tackled and will only increase in severity without significant remedial action to NHS pension taxation rules. We have proposed solutions to you via the BMA's pensions committee, including the urgent need to amend the Finance Act and more longer-term the introduction of a tax unregistered pensions scheme for senior NHS staff. We have offered to meet with you or your team to discuss how change can be brought about swiftly and effectively for the benefit of the NHS and its patients. This offer still stands and as you appoint your new Government I hope it will be accepted as soon as possible.

As I have said, the scale of the challenges facing the NHS cannot be underestimated and we have no chance of rising to them without a well-resourced and well-motivated workforce. Even in such difficult financial times the NHS must be prioritised and that means prioritising its staff. The NHS will be one of, if not the, leading issue at the next general election and not to act on the issues I have outlined above will have a lasting impact for years to come.

I would be more than willing to meet with you to discuss any of the above and hope that you will instruct your Government departments to engage meaningfully with the BMA to find long lasting solutions for the NHS.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P. Banfield', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Philip Banfield
Chair, BMA Council