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Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care

Sent via email

7 August 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

Thank you for your letter on 20 July 2023, I appreciate your acknowledgement of the hard work and dedication of consultants across the country. As I have recognised, we have had constructive meetings with officials and had thought we were making good progress. We were therefore extremely shocked by yours and the Prime Minister's insistence to refuse to negotiate on pay for this year and the Government's failure to provide a meaningful pay offer or even to recognise pay erosion of consultants. Given that Government brought these discussions to an end, we were left with no option but to take strike action.

As I have repeatedly outlined to you, we believe that the change in the terms of reference and the remit letters that successive governments have enforced on the DDRB have stripped it of its independence, and this has directly led to the pay erosion experienced by consultants. The fact that consultants held their first strike action on pay in almost 50 years perfectly demonstrates how broken the DDRB process is and how consultants have lost faith and trust in it.

We firmly believe that the best way to avert further strike action is for us to meet to continue our discussions about pay and DDRB reform. Given this dispute is about consultant pay and the impact this is having on the NHS, we were therefore very disappointed by your suggestion that you would only meet to discuss non-pay issues. This will not resolve the dispute and we believe that it is essential that we meet in the coming days in order to prevent further rounds of industrial action.

Consultants will be taking strike action on 24 and 25 August and we have announced further planned action for the 19 and 20 September. However, I reiterate that it is not too late to avert these strikes and it is essential that we meet to discuss pay in the coming days.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Vishal Sharma
BMA Consultants Committee Chair

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