

E publicaffairs@bma.org.uk

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

Sent via email

18 September 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

We are grateful to your officials for the constructive conversations about how we may settle this dispute. The BMA consultants committee have been clear that strikes could be avoided if the Government were to present us with a credible offer that we could put to our members. We have been consistent in this view throughout, dating back to before we even balloted for industrial action and this very much remains our position. We are willing to negotiate with government at any stage, but for strike action to be stood down we need to be able to present our members with an offer and cannot cancel strikes to simply enter talks.

We thought it would be helpful to reiterate exactly what the key asks of the consultant committee are and what would be required to end the dispute. Data from the Office for National Statistics has demonstrated that consultants have experienced much greater pay erosion than other public sector workers and have seen their pay fall much more than those in the private sector. We are simply asking for fairness and are demanding an end to real terms pay cuts and a fair mechanism for this pay loss to be corrected.

We are, therefore, seeking a pay package for 2023-24 above the level of RPI inflation for the 12 months until April 2023 (the date at which the award applies) that ensures our pay is not eroded further. This is not dissimilar to the settlement in Scotland for junior doctors which demonstrates that this is deliverable. We are willing to consider investment in non-headline pay areas, to help reach agreement.

We are also seeking that the independence of our pay review body, the DDRB, is fully restored in line with its founding principles. Once restored, the new DDRB should be jointly commissioned to review what has happened to consultants pay since its remit was constrained by Government in 2008. The DDRB should then make a fully independent assessment of what a consultant should be paid, considering the quality of recruitment and retention and pay in comparable sectors and its recommendations implemented accordingly.

It is essential that we can reach agreement, not only to bring an end to the current dispute and prevent further strike action as we head into winter, but to ensure that the NHS can recruit and retain the highly experienced staff that it needs. This comes at a time when other countries such as

Co-chief executive officers: Neeta Major & Rachel Podolak

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Ireland, Australia, Canada are actively headhunting UK doctors. Unless the NHS begins to value its doctors appropriately, the workforce crisis we currently face will only worsen.

We hope these conversations will continue and urge you to present us with a credible offer so that further action can be avoided.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Vishal Sharma
Chair, BMA Consultants Committee

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

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