

E publicaffairs@bma.org.uk

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

Sent via email

02 October 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

You will be under no illusion of the strength of feeling from our members about the Government's refusal to address doctors' pay given this week's unprecedented, but completely avoidable, three days of joint strike action. I understand from the Health Secretary's recent correspondence that your Government will not enter negotiations whilst strike dates have been called – we do not feel that this is an appropriate position for the Government to adopt and our door has remained open. We have been willing to enter talks, even up to the last minute, in order to reach an agreement that could have averted this week's strike action. Currently, consultants have not announced further strike dates and, in an attempt to reach a resolution, we are willing not to call further strikes for four weeks to facilitate negotiations taking place. We are also willing to involve ACAS to conciliate a resolution and would encourage you to accept this offer. There is now no possible reason why the Government cannot negotiate with us with a view to ending this dispute.

I urge you to act now – before any more strike dates are called – to end the current dispute and prevent further strike action being taken by Consultants, as we head into winter. Strike action is not inevitable – but if Ministers continue to refuse to engage with us, and we have no credible deal that we can put to our members by 3 November, then we will have no option but to give notice for strike action to resume in November and December.

I won't repeat our asks in detail here – these were outlined in [my recent letter](#) on 18 September. You know our terms: a pay package for 2023-24 above the level of RPI inflation for the 12 months until April 2023; the independence of our pay review body, the DDRB, to be fully restored; and a review by the new DDRB of what has happened to consultants' pay since its remit was constrained by Government in 2008, with the recommendations of its fully independent assessment of what a consultant should be paid implemented accordingly. Whilst we are grateful for the initial discussions with your officials prior to the September industrial action, it has now been a staggering 190 days since Consultants met with Ministers regarding this dispute. We won't find a resolution that ensures the NHS can recruit and retain the highly experienced staff that it needs if Ministers keep refusing to come to the negotiating table.

Everyone wants this dispute to end – your Government's refusal even to talk to us about pay is coming at a huge cost to all involved. Patients have been clear: findings from our [recent public survey](#) reveal that a majority believes the Government should reopen pay talks and use the funds associated with

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covering industrial action to settle the pay dispute. Our peers have been clear: NHS system leaders are routinely calling for negotiations to progress. And we have been clear: meet us and find a way forward before more strike action is called.

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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