



Department
of Health

*From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health*

*Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS*

Mb-sofs@dh.gsi.gov.uk

POC_1030306

Dr Mark Porter
BMA Council Chair
BMA House
Tavistock Square
London
WC1H 9JP

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Dear Mark,

Next week's withdrawal of emergency care by junior doctors, called by the BMA, seriously risks the safety of many patients who depend on the NHS. I understand that we have not been able to come to an agreement over the terms of a new contract for junior doctors, but strongly urge you to reconsider whether the action being taken is proportionate or appropriate. Every doctor has a personal choice as to whether to participate in the industrial action, but you also have a choice as the leader of the BMA and doctor of many years' experience as to whether a disagreement with the government should be pursued in this way – for the first time in the history of the NHS.

As you know, the new contract for juniors is now being introduced following the failure of negotiations earlier this year. Had the BMA not gone back on its word to negotiate on the principal outstanding issue - Saturday pay - we would have an agreed contract by now and imposition would have been avoided. It is a highly regrettable outcome that none of us would have wished.

However whilst we will now be proceeding with the new contracts, that does not mean that we cannot rebuild trust with further talks on a range of issues that can improve the terms and conditions for junior doctors. I would like to propose that instead of proceeding with this week's industrial action, you meet with me to discuss:



- workforce and funding requirements for 7 day services, an issue which you have repeatedly raised;
- improvements in training that could help restore the continuity of training that many feel has been lost for junior doctors;
- implementation of the new contract in a way that is effective at reducing the maximum hours junior doctors can be asked to work;
- improving work-life balance for junior doctors, especially people with family responsibilities;
- the burden of examination and training fees.

The extreme action planned will be deeply worrying for patients, and place enormous additional strain on our NHS at a time of intense pressure. I therefore appeal to you one final time to call off strike action that will see doctors withdraw potentially life-saving care, and to meet with me on Monday to discuss a better way forward.

JEREMY HUNT