



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

4<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Dear Colleague,

Today, I have set out the Government's firm offer to junior doctors as part of our plan to reform contracts to better support a 7-day NHS. As you know, the first promise on the first page of our election manifesto was to ensure NHS care is the same quality across the week.

Independent research published in the British Medical Journal is clear that there are 11,000 excess deaths in our hospitals every year – the 'weekend effect'. We are determined to change this by ensuring that hospitals can staff their hospitals properly 7 days a week to ensure that patients get the care they need whenever they fall ill. There's a significant body of academic and clinical evidence backing this up.

- Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, the NHS Medical Director, has said there is a 'weekend effect which if addressed could save lives'.
- The BMJ published study found that patients admitted on a Sunday have a 15% greater risk of mortality compared to those admitted on Wednesday. The authors said this 'raises challenging questions about reduced service provision at weekends'.
- A 2012 study – Freemantle et al – found that the day of admission was associated with increased risk of death in seven of the ten most common clinical conditions. Patients admitted on a Sunday with renal failure, for example, had a 37% greater risk of death compared with those admitted on a Wednesday.
- The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges said in 2012 that the weekend effect was very likely to be attributable to deficiencies in care processes because of a lack of skilled senior staff and a system that doesn't provide full diagnostic and support services 7 days.
- In 2010, Aylin et al found that mortality rates are higher for patients admitted at weekends compared to weekdays.

Changing this means reforming contracts – put in place by Labour – for junior doctors in 2000 and for consultants in 2003. Negotiations on the new contract began on the basis of a shared view between the BMA and the Government that the current contract had served its purpose and needed reform. In fact, the BMA accepted that point as far back as 2007.

But in recent months the BMA has been misleading its members in saying junior doctors will get pay cuts of 30 per cent, and will be forced to work longer hours. **As I have made very clear, the opposite is true, so I hope this letter is helpful in reassuring your constituents. I made an offer of a rise in basic pay to the BMA in September, but they chose to ignore it, so the firm offer I am setting out today says –**

- A reduction in Saturday working rates will be offset by an 11% increase in basic pay, which will mean doctors' pensions pots also go up.
- Around three-quarters of doctors moving to the new contract will get a pay increase, with the remainder getting pay protection compared to their current contract.
- Tired doctors are bad for patient safety, so we are cutting the maximum working week from 91 to 72 hours, and introducing a new maximum shift pattern of 4 night shifts or 5 long day shifts - compared to the current contract which permits 7 consecutive night shifts or 12 consecutive long day shifts.
- That's why the NHS Medical Director, Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, has said if implemented properly these plans will improve patient safety.

All the details are available on NHS Employers' website – they negotiate contractual terms on behalf of the Government. This includes a pay calculator so that all junior doctors can find out what the deal means for them – at [www.nhsemployers.org/juniordoctors](http://www.nhsemployers.org/juniordoctors)

There's a broader lesson from Labour's time in Government we're determined to learn. They didn't take action to address shockingly poor care – and patients at Mid Staffs, Morecambe Bay, Basildon, Tameside and several other hospitals suffered as a result. Since, our tough new special measures process is turning places where care is poor around. We will continue to focus on that – and must never again allow academic debates on the statistical methodology around mortality rates to become a substitute for action to prevent human tragedies unfolding.

I wanted to let you know that **between 3 and 4 o'clock this afternoon** Ben Gummer from my team will be holding a **drop-in surgery in the Members' Tea Room**, and will speak to the **1922 Committee at half past five**. As ever, please feel free to contact me or Steve Brine, my PPS, if you want further help on this or any other health issue in your constituency.

Yours ever,

**The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP**  
**Secretary of State for Health**