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THE PRIME MINISTER

28 April 2016

Dear Professor Nadi,

Thank you and your co-signatories for your letter.

As I have stated a number of times, junior doctors are the backbone of the NHS and the whole Government is incredibly grateful for their hard work and dedication to their patients. The Government's view is that the current regrettable impasse is entirely of the British Medical Association's (BMA) creation, and we are concerned that the BMA are not representing their hard working members in a way that is best for them. During my tenure as Prime Minister, we have engaged in a process lasting over three years, holding over 75 meetings and recently making many concessions to try and broker a deal. On the outstanding issue of Saturday pay, the Government made three significant concessions over several months, while in comparison the BMA has made no attempt to compromise. If the BMA had been reasonable and agreed to negotiate, as they committed to at ACAS talks in November, then we would have a negotiated settlement by now.

As the Health Secretary has said to the BMA, it is therefore unreasonable, having shown unwillingness to compromise on the only substantive issue left to resolve between our two sides, to ask the Government to scrap the introduction of the new contract. The contract we are introducing contains a wide range of safeguards that will improve junior doctors' working conditions, reducing the maximum number of hours a doctor can work in the week and ensuring that no doctor will have to work more than four consecutive nights – abolishing the 'week of nights'. When it comes to pay, all junior doctors will receive a 13.5 per cent pay rise, to counter for the changes to the current system of unsocial hours payments and no junior doctor working legal hours will receive a pay cut.

As you will know, the contract is being introduced in a phased manner and we have committed to be open in its implementation and pick up any issues that arise with juniors themselves and the BMA, as well as looking closely at any effects on patient care. In addition, we have recognised that there are several wider issues that have needed addressing for many years, such as the way training and education currently work, that have contributed to low morale among junior doctors. We are determined to address these and that is why in February we launched an independent review, led by Professor Dame Sue Bailey, Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, and I would urge you all to show your commitment by supporting this important work.

The first line on the first page of this Government's manifesto set out our ambition to be the first country in the world to offer a proper patient-focussed seven day health service. We cannot duck this challenge. The new contract offers better terms on pay and a safer working environment, whilst enabling hospitals to offer more consistent standards of care across the week. As leaders of the medical profession I would appreciate your help with your colleagues and members to ensure that they are engaging with this process to ensure that the new contract is implemented safely.

Yours sincerely,

David Cameron