



www.hcsa.com

1 Kingsclere Road,
Overton, Basingstoke
Hampshire, RG25 3JA

Tel: 01256 770999

Email: conspec@hcsa.com

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Sent by email

Tuesday 4th July 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

I write on behalf of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association, whose members encompass hospital doctors of all grades working in the NHS. Today, HCSA junior doctors voted by 96.5% in favour of continuing strike action on pay in the first re-ballot by any of the medical unions in dispute.

The current wave of industrial unrest, involving junior doctors and consultants, has been many years in the making. In the face of this unprecedented situation I write to express grave concern at the current stance of your government, which I fear will prolong these disputes indefinitely, causing yet more disruption to patients and pressure on services. I urge you to reflect deeply on the government's continued rigid adherence to its position, and to intervene to find a solution.

It seems clear that you have taken a personal interest in industrial action. Equally, it seems clear that government negotiators have been given extremely limited room for manoeuvre to resolve it. I note that, when pressed on the matter of pay as you launched the new NHS long-term workforce plan, you persevered with the position that the bigger issue is the wider economic situation. This suggests that you do not support movement on the area of medical pay, in the context of immediate inflationary pressures.

As well as the interests of patients, we would however draw your attention to the economic consequences of failing to respond to the concerns of hospital doctors over pay, retention and staffing. Around one in eight people in England are awaiting procedures, many of whom face barriers to work as a result. The share of the 16-64 population languishing outside the workforce due to long-term sickness is at record highs. In the context of near record low unemployment this is inevitably having an inflationary impact.

Ending the interruption to services due to the current dispute would therefore play a central role in easing pressures in the labour market. Measured against this greater objective, the failure to negotiate meaningfully on the very real grievances of junior doctors is frankly unfathomable.

*The **professional** association and trade union for hospital doctors, wherever you are in your career*

It becomes even more so given the need to retain both consultants and junior doctors, the consultants of the future, who will be critical to the delivery of an NHS workforce plan which entails a massive increase in demand for training and trainers.

Let me be frank - there is an answer to be found to this dispute, but failing to move from an initial negotiating point so far removed from the position of hospital doctors is not going to deliver it. If we are to have any hope of a resolution, it seems clear that your government will need to move its position. It will need to find the bravery to acknowledge and engage with the grievances of hospital doctors to seek a longer-term solution on pay erosion - something surely possible even despite your position on immediate inflation.

Inaction is not an option. Our call is therefore simple. For the sake of the NHS and for the sake of the economy – be brave, intervene, and give your negotiators the latitude to find a way out of this dispute.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Naru Narayanan', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Naru Narayanan
HCSA President