



Department
of Health

Your Ref: Council – ROH - 20171213

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Thank you for your letter of 19 December to Jeremy Hunt about the NHS. I apologise for the delay in replying.

We know the NHS is busier than ever before – A&E attendances increased by over 30 per cent over the period 2004/05 to 2016/17. On average, over 7,800 more people attended an A&E department each day in 2016/17 than in 2009/10. The NHS has more robust plans in place than ever to cope with winter, supported by £437million of additional funding and £1billion of funding for the social care system this year. Making the money available earlier in the financial year created certainty and enabled the NHS to spend the money more effectively.

As you know, from 2017, the Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and Salford Royal Foundation Trust became part of the Northern Care Alliance NHS Group. It is made up of four new care organisations, which are Bury/Rochdale, Oldham, Salford and North Manchester.

I am advised that the Oldham Care Organisation has benefited from system resilience funding to help address patient flow and capacity within the system, with further funding support received following the autumn Budget. The funding has been used to support a number of measures to ensure effective management of patient flow, including working with colleagues in primary care and mental health to address frequent pressures and to proactively manage complex cases and protracted inpatient stays.

I am further advised that business cases have been prepared to request additional medical and nursing staff in urgent care and general/acute medicine, which will be considered by the Trust Board. Currently, the emergency department is at its full establishment of staff, both medical and nursing. On the acute medical unit, medical

posts are fully covered (some using locum cover) and gaps in nursing are being mitigated by using agency staff and senior nursing colleagues. The Trust has confirmed that a full recruitment plan is in place.

With regard to NHS pay, our priority is to balance the needs of patients with the interests of hardworking staff. To do this we rely on the independent pay review body (PRB) process. The PRBs include independent experts and carry out their work in a transparent manner, considering very carefully all the written and oral evidence they receive on the state of recruitment, retention and motivation of NHS staff.

We know pay restraint has been challenging and we are listening to the concerns of NHS staff and their representatives. We have also listened to staff who tell us that they want to know they will have the right number of colleagues working alongside them in hospital or in the community. Pay restraint has helped the NHS to recruit an additional 32,300 professionally qualified clinical staff since 2010, including 14,200 more nurses on our wards. There are currently over 52,000 nurses in training, and more than 3,500 nurses have participated in the Return to Practice Scheme.

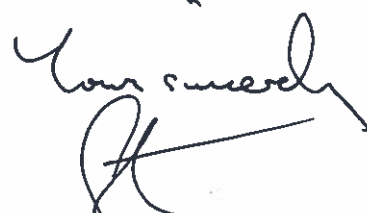
We have already confirmed that the across-the-board one per cent cap on public sector pay increases will no longer apply to pay awards for 2018/19. This is due to a recognition that, in some parts of the public sector, flexibility to go above the one per cent may be required to ensure continued delivery of world-class public services.

In the Budget we announced that, in order to protect frontline services in the NHS, we are committing to fund pay awards as part of a pay deal for NHS staff on the Agenda for Change contract, including nurses, midwives and paramedics. Public sector pay packages will continue to recognise workers' vital contributions, while also being affordable and fair to taxpayers as a whole.

The independent PRBs will, as is usual practice, consider written and oral evidence from a range of stakeholders, not just from the Government, including NHS Employers and NHS Providers that represent NHS trusts, NHS trades unions, NHS Improvement and Health Education England. We will consider carefully the recommendations from the PRBs for the NHS.

We continue to encourage employers to focus hard on the overall employment offer and, through pay and non-pay benefits, make their organisation a place where every single member of the healthcare team wants to work, where staff receive the training and support they deserve, and where poor care, poor behaviour, bullying and harassment is not tolerated.

I hope this reply is helpful.


STEVE BARCLAY