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**14 MAY 2007**

Dear Dr Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 20 April to Patricia Hewitt on behalf of a number of your constituents about specialty training as part of Modernising Medical Careers (MMC).

I was sorry to learn of your constituents' concerns. I can assure them that our aim is to find the right people for the right jobs for the benefit of the NHS, its patients and its staff. To this end, MMC is a major initiative aimed at improving both patient care and doctors' training through a more structured, competency-based approach, focusing on both the clinical and the more generic skills that doctors require to meet the needs of the service.

MMC will improve patient safety and service delivery through providing better-trained doctors and a reduced dependence on less experienced trainees. Training will be set against the most up-to-date curricula, developed by the medical Royal Colleges, and national standards, set by the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board. We also believe that MMC will benefit the NHS as a whole as training will be more sensitive and adaptable to changing service needs. With regard to trainee doctors, MMC will provide streamlined career paths and eliminate repetition and delay in training. Doctors in run-through training programmes will progress seamlessly to the completion of training.

However, in view of the concerns that have been expressed, we set up a review of the MMC recruitment and selection process. The review group is led by Professor Neil Douglas, Vice Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, and includes representatives of the Royal Colleges, junior doctors, the four UK Health Departments and employers. The review group has put forward proposals for the way ahead for recruitment to specialty training. We have written to all applicants, consultants and NHS organisations to confirm the details of the revised arrangements. These new arrangements commenced in April.

The new arrangements have the support of the British Medical Association and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. I accept that this has been a time of great concern and uncertainty and that many NHS Trusts, consultants and junior doctors are dedicating a great deal of time and effort to deliver the new processes on time.

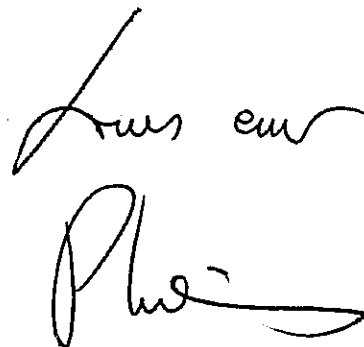
The remit of the review group has been limited to the questions and concerns raised about the operation of this year's recruitment process. We believe that the time is now right to undertake a wider review of MMC and apply the lessons we have learned to a wider context.

We therefore decided to establish an independent review, which will examine the processes underlying MMC and make recommendations to Ministers to ensure that we can implement any necessary improvements for 2008 and beyond. This review will be chaired by Sir John Tooke, Dean of the Peninsula Medical School, Chair of the Council of Heads of Medical Schools and Chair of the UK Health Education Advisory Committee. It will be conducted independently of the four Health Departments and will have its own independent secretariat. It will report on an interim basis in September 2007.

The recruitment process is of course a crucial consideration, but we need to look at the broader MMC programme. The review will clarify and strengthen the principles underlying MMC, examining the extent to which MMC has engaged the medical profession and make recommendations to ensure that it has the support of the profession in the future. It will also look at the implementation processes underlying MMC and the methods used in selection and recruitment and how MMC can deliver a flexible response and can reflect local needs across the UK as well as safeguarding national standards.

Further information can be found at: [www.mmc.nhs.uk](http://www.mmc.nhs.uk) and [www.mtas.nhs.uk](http://www.mtas.nhs.uk).

I hope this reply is helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Hunt', written in a cursive style.

**PHILIP HUNT**