

Dear Secretary of State,

An opportunity: funding to address the cost of industrial action

I am writing to welcome you to your new role as the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

We have enjoyed constructive relationships with your recent predecessors and junior ministers, meeting to discuss a wide range of topics including the NHS Long-Term Workforce Plan, industrial action and GP contract renewal. We have also brought together our members for private roundtables as engagement exercises, working with Ministers, Special Advisors and officials to ensure departmental priorities including the Major Conditions Strategy, the Hewitt Review and the work of the joint Health and Work Unit with the DWP reflect the realities of frontline delivery. In addition, NHS Employers are part of the NHS Confederation, and have been supporting negotiations between the BMA and DHSC. We do hope we can continue such a relationship with you and your new team.

Our members are currently grappling with the announcement from last week that saw their pleas for more funding to cover the costs of industrial action and inflation answered by taking investment away from key service areas. This is likely to reduce access to care for patients and further increase pressures on the service in the medium-term as more people become more unwell whilst waiting for treatment.

Members are also concerned that the £800 million will mainly be taken from central budgets such as capital and technology, but these are exactly the things that will help to drive productivity across the service in order to make the NHS Long-Term Workforce Plan – which we strongly welcomed - deliverable.

Our members have long talked about a desperate need for government to shift its decision-making on health and care from the short-term - focused only on the current political cycle - to the longer-term, more strategic policies that would build a more

Date

13.11.2023

**For the attention of
Victoria Atkins MP**

Secretary of State for Health and
Social Care

sustainable future for the health service that can better meet the health needs of an ageing population.

Given you are joining DHSC from the Treasury, I wanted to share some analysis we published in October 2022 that highlights the economic returns of investing in our health services. [Analysis](#) we commissioned Carnall Farrar to undertake shows that every pound invested in the NHS brings back £4 to the economy in gross value-added (GVA). [Further analysis](#) we published in August 2023 shows that investing in community and primary care services brings the biggest returns to the economy, with every pound bringing back £14 in GVA.

Our members want to see the government use NHS funding as an explicit tool for economic development, using it to help more people back in to work, which in turn will boost our local and national economies.

Ahead of the Autumn Statement, NHS leaders are hoping that your appointment provides an opportunity for the short-sighted announcement on addressing the costs of nearly a year of industrial action on the NHS to be reassessed.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss at your earliest convenience. Your team can be in touch with externalaffairs@nhsconfed.org to arrange.

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Taylor
Chief executive
NHS Confederation

The NHS Confederation is the membership organisation that brings together, supports and speaks for the whole healthcare system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The members we represent employ 1.5 million staff, care for more than 1 million patients a day and control £150 billion of public expenditure. We promote collaboration and partnership working as the key to improving population health, delivering high-quality care and reducing health inequalities.