



Department
of Health

*From the Rt Hon the Earl Howe P.C.
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Quality (Lords)*

POC6 914126

Malcolm Alexander
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Via email: MBAlexander03@aol.com

Dear Malcolm,

Thank you for your e-mail correspondence of 21 January about your concerns in respect of securing a safe and effective paramedic workforce.

Firstly, may I say that Jeremy and all his ministerial team including myself fully appreciate the excellent work that our paramedics do up and down the country day in, day out which you have so eloquently described in your letter. We are committed to ensuring paramedics are paid fairly for the very difficult and challenging work they do and that they should be able to enjoy the fulfilling careers they deserve.

Therefore, I am delighted that the strike over pay which unions had been planning between 29 January and 24 February has been averted. The Government and union leaders agreed a revised pay offer for 2015/16 which achieves a balance between an affordable pay increase and enabling the NHS to maintain the staff numbers it needs to deliver services to patients. We are awaiting the outcome of ballots unions are conducting with their members to see if they accept the offer and expect to hear the outcomes from those ballots by the end of the month. Assuming the deal is accepted, this will mean that the majority of NHS staff including paramedics will receive a consolidated 1% pay increase in 2015/16 plus incremental rises for those entitled to them. The pay offer also includes a commitment by ambulance service employers to work in partnership with ambulance unions on career progression as included below, which is taken from a letter containing the pay offer from Jeremy Hunt to Christina McAnea dated 27 January.

“Of course, career progression is an important element of any job. Health Education England (HEE) and the College of Paramedics have established the Paramedic Education and Training Steering Group to look into all aspects of education and training for paramedics, including educational and developmental opportunities. This includes setting up mentoring and preceptorship arrangements in order to assist with establishing clearer pathways for career progression. The Department continues to engage with HEE, the College of Paramedics and others on this work.”

I note your reference to “Jeremy’s comments about potentially imposing restrictions on strike action as tragically unhelpful”. His comments relate to the Conservative party’s manifesto commitments and is dependent on the outcome of the next General Election.

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Rennie

EARL HOWE