

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE
UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1V 2QQ

01 November 2016

Dear Sir Andrew,

Re: BMA concerns regarding government statements on NHS spending increases

The BMA has raised concerns for some time over statements made by representatives of Government that the NHS budget will increase in real terms by £10 billion during this parliament. These concerns are in line with those raised by the Health Select Committee Chair, in an open letter to the Chancellor, dated the 26 October, HM Opposition and by various other prominent health stakeholders.

On over 20 occasions in the House of Commons Chamber in the last 18 months alone, plus numerous more occasions, including at Select Committee sessions, in the press and at events outside of Westminster, the Health Secretary has referred to the government committing to the NHS's own plan, which asks for £10 billion more funding to be available to the NHS, in real terms, by the end of this Parliament.

The BMA asks that you advise on the validity of these statements, with reference to the analysis carried out by the Health Select Committee regarding two areas. Firstly, that a £10 billion increase in funding to the NHS can only be calculated by increasing the spending review period by an additional year, which belies the Health Secretary's statement that this funding will be delivered "over the course of this parliament". Secondly, and in our opinion the more serious claim, that rather than an "extra £10 billion, in real terms" being available to the NHS there will actually be only £4.5 billion of additional funding¹. The remaining £5.5 billion can only be accounted for by including savings made from cuts to areas of health spending which fall outside of NHS England's budget, including; local authority public health grants and training funded through Health Education England.

We believe that the statements made by the Health Secretary on NHS funding over the course of this parliament do not reveal the true value of provision to the NHS as a whole, and therefore have the potential to be misleading. We would welcome your assessment of this issue and await your advice in due course.

It is vitally important that patients, the public and those working in the NHS have confidence in Government claims related to NHS funding, and that if misleading figures are found to have been used, these are highlighted and challenged to prevent them being used again in the future.

If you require any further information I would be happy to discuss this matter at greater length.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mark Porter
BMA council chair

¹ Health select Committee report, Impact of the Spending Review on health and social care, First Report of Session 2016–17 p.8