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Dear Andrew,

25<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Thank you for your contributions to the debate of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Bill 2019 in the House of Lords earlier this week. During that debate I undertook to provide you with a clarification regarding whether the Executive Formation Bill, in the event an Executive has not been restored in the autumn, would provide the UK Government with the powers to establish a medical campus in Derry/Londonderry.

As I answered during that debate, the Bill which has now received Royal Assent this week, does not provide such powers. As you will be aware, measures to improve higher education or to establish a new medical school or university anywhere in Northern Ireland, are devolved matters.

The Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Execution of Functions) Act 2018 did not give any new powers to either the UK Government or the Permanent Secretaries of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). That Act provided the Northern Ireland Departments with the certainty and clarity they need to continue to deliver public services in the absence of an Executive, including supporting guidance which provided a framework for decision making for the Northern Ireland Departments when judging if those powers should be used in the absence of Ministers.

In relation to the medical school proposal for the North West, I understand that a business case has been submitted to the NI departments and, whilst it has been considered at an official level, they have determined that decisions on the business case would rightly fall to be taken by a Minister and a future NI Executive.

It is this Government's fervent hope that the Northern Ireland's political parties can find agreement to restore the devolved institutions so that locally accountable leaders can take the strategic policy decisions needed to make progress on important devolved matters, such as that which you raised during the debate. The UK Government is making every effort to make the ongoing talks process a success and to see the restored of the Executive.

I am copying this letter to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Lord Duncan of Springbank. I am also placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

With best wishes  
James

**VISCOUNT YOUNGER OF LECKIE**

Lord Adonis  
House of Lords