



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Baroness Merron
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Women's Health and Mental Health*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

19 February 2026

Dear Lord Kamall,

UK MEDICAL TRAINING (PRIORITISATION) BILL

I would like to thank you for your continued engagement on the Medical Training (Prioritisation) Bill and for your contributions and observations during the Bill debates.

I am writing to you in response to the questions that you raised during the Committee on 12 February 2026 related to UK workforce planning.

You raised questions related to the level of provision of medical training places. As noble Lords are aware, alongside introducing a system of prioritisation for specialty training places through this Bill, the government is also taking action to create more specialty training places. In the 10 Year Health Plan, we committed to create 1,000 new specialty training posts over the next 3 years, with a focus on specialties where there is greatest need. This is on top of creating 250 additional GP training posts each year. The Bill will not delay this.

You asked for information about the geographical distribution of specialty training places and how we are ensuring that the provision of training will meet regional needs. We have not yet confirmed which specialties will receive new posts. However, we will ensure that expansion is targeted where patient demand and workforce pressures are most acute. Some programmes and regions are already at capacity for delivering properly supervised training posts. Expanding training capacity will therefore need to be done gradually, to ensure placements remain high quality and that appropriate supervision is in place.

We recognise that remote, rural and coastal areas can be less popular training locations, despite there being significant patient need and populations in these areas that are often among the least well served. However, it seems unlikely that a significant reason for UK graduates choosing to work abroad is that the alternative is that they would need to work in those areas. Doctors are a highly mobile workforce, and this is not commonly cited as a reason for leaving the UK register.

You also asked about the challenge of doctors having to cover the upfront cost of their training. Since the beginning of this year, the government has been engaging in intensive and constructive discussions with the BMA resident doctors committee, exploring various measures aimed at improving the working lives of resident doctors. At this stage, we are not able to share details of proposals under discussion, which are intended to support constructive engagement and longer-term resolution to industrial action.

Turning to the publication of the 10 Year Workforce Plan. The Government is committed to publishing this plan in Spring this year to set out action to create a workforce ready to deliver the transformed service set out in the 10 Year Health Plan. The 10 Year Workforce Plan will ensure the NHS has the right people in the right places, with the right skills to care for patients, when they need it. NHS staff told us through the 10 Year Health Plan engagement that they are crying out for change. This Workforce Plan will set out how we will deliver that change by making sure that staff are better treated, and have better training, more fulfilling roles and hope for the future.

Noble Lords also asked about next steps of the Medical Training Review. Phase 1 of the review has now concluded and the diagnostic report has been published by NHS England. Phase 1 identified key challenges and areas for improvement across postgraduate medical training, alongside what currently works well. Phase 2 will focus on exploring these issues and developing reform options. This will involve working with a wide range of stakeholders across the system to design a package of reform. This second phase is already underway with governance, independent oversight and multiple engagement routes in place. The approach supports a transparent, evidence-based reform process aligned to long term workforce priorities. We will set out in due course further timelines for phase 2.

Thank you for your continued engagement on these crucial matters. I am copying this letter to all peers who spoke to this Group and hope it provides some of the clarity and reassurance you were seeking.

I will deposit this letter in the libraries of both Houses.

All good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gillian". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

BARONESS MERRON