



Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
London SW1A 2NS

18 February 2016

Dear Jeremy,

We write to you to express our serious concern over NHS England's decision to cut the post of National Clinical Director (NCD) for Adult Neurology, only two and a half years after the first appointment to the role.

In 2013, following a critical assessment of neurology services by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee noting "a lack of impetus, focus and direction", NHS England created the role of National Clinical Director (NCD) for Adult Neurology. The appointment of Dr David Bateman as NCD in 2013 provided neurology services with much-needed clinical leadership at the national level for the first time.

In the short time since his appointment, Dr Bateman has begun a wide range of initiatives aimed at addressing the longstanding problems affecting neurology services. He has worked closely with NHS England's strategic clinical networks to lead and coordinate regional service improvement initiatives, such as modernisation of referral processes for headache to reduce the number of unnecessary hospital admissions, and the development of auditable standards for acute neurology to improve patients' experience of hospital care.

His work with Public Health England's Neurology Intelligence Network has led to the first publicly available data and intelligence on neurology services, allowing patients and the public for the first time to scrutinise the performance of local areas and hold them to account. He has taken the lead on strengthening and developing community services, including developing plans with NHS England for a community care service to support better condition management, increased wellbeing, and reduced admissions to acute services. NHS England's decision to end the position of NCD for Adult Neurology after such a short time will undermine these initiatives.

The decision also reinforces the impression that neurology services are not a priority for the NHS. The evidence suggests that commissioners do not focus on improving the quality and value of neurology services, even though they cost the NHS over £4 billion per year, including funding for 827,242 emergency admissions. Freedom of Information data shows that fewer than 15% of local clinical commissioning groups can state how much they spend on neurology locally. This disengagement has a clear impact on patients. The latest NHS England GP patient survey that patients with long-term neurological problems report both some of the worst states of pain



and some of the highest levels of anxiety or depression, with the lowest health outcome scores of any long-term conditions.

In this context, we cannot understand NHS England's decision to remove the only national leadership position dedicated to neurology services so soon after its creation. We are very concerned that the decision will further disadvantage neurology services and the millions of people who rely on them. We urge you to use your influence as Secretary of State to encourage NHS England to reverse this damaging decision.

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Gale, Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Parkinson's

Dave Anderson MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Muscular Dystrophy

Jim Fitzpatrick MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Primary Headache Disorders

Madeleine Moon MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Parkinson's and All-Party Parliamentary Group on Motor Neurone Disease

Rebecca Harris MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Brain Tumours

Simon Hoare MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Multiple Sclerosis

Valerie Vaz MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Epilepsy