

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

19<sup>th</sup> February 2016

Dear Secretary of State,

As health professionals with an interest in neurology, we are extremely concerned that NHS England has chosen not to continue the role of National Clinical Director for Adult Neurology beyond March of this year. We are writing to you to express our view that the decision will have a negative impact on the development of neurology services and ultimately on patient outcomes, and to request that you consider asking NHS England to reverse the decision.

Neurology services in the NHS have suffered from the low level of attention and priority given to them by key decision-makers including local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). It is frequently difficult to persuade CCGs to take the time to work with health professionals and patients to consider how neurology services and pathways for can be improved. Almost 80% of CCGs are unable to state how many people live with neurological conditions in their area, and are consequently in no position to take a strategic approach to service improvement. Consequently, neurology services have been allowed to wither in many areas, leading to enormous local variation in patients' access to appropriate specialist provision. This is despite evidence from 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 the short time since his appointment as National Clinical Director for Adult Neurology in summer 2013, Dr Bateman has made real progress in encouraging commissioners and others to recognise the need to improve neurology services. He has worked with NHS England's strategic clinical networks to promote engagement with neurology services and develop service standards and pathway guidance for commissioners and providers. In his capacity as co-chair of NHS England's neurosciences clinical reference group, he has led work to clarify commissioning responsibilities for neurology across specialised and non-specialised services. And as chair of Public Health England's Neurology Intelligence Network's expert reference group, he has led the development of new data sources for neurology, enabling comparative scrutiny of CCG performance against key outcome measures for the first time.

Although there is much more work to be done, it is clear that the national clinical leadership provided by Dr Bateman has led to real progress in tackling the longstanding issues affecting neurology services, including a postcode lottery in access to specialist care, and frequent waits of a year or more from first symptoms

to diagnosis. There is now real concern among those who care for people with neurological conditions that this progress will be undermined. NHS England's decision effectively takes neurology back to the position it was in prior to 2013, when "implementation [of service frameworks] was left to local commissioners without the national leadership necessary to drive improvements" (in the words of the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee in 2012). The Committee was clear that this approach did not work, an assessment shared by patients and professionals, and we see no reason to think that this will change.

There is real scope to improve the efficiency and quality of neurology services in the NHS. However this will not happen without effective clinical leadership at the national level. We hope that you will intervene on this important issue and ask NHS England to reconsider its decision.

We have sent a copy of this letter to Simon Stevens at NHS England.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Middleton, Chief Executive, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists

Dr Alan Carson, President, British Neuropsychiatry Association

Dr Ali Jamous, President, British Association of Spinal Cord Injuries Specialists

Dr Alok Tyagi, Chair, British Association for the Study of Headache

Dr Chris Kipps, Clinical Director, Wessex Mental Health Dementia and Neurological Conditions Strategic Clinical Network, NHS England

Dr Geraint Fuller, Past President, Association of British Neurologists

Dr John Andrzejowski, President, Neuro Anaesthesia and Critical Care Society of Great Britain & Ireland

Dr John Hughes, Group Medical Director, Sue Ryder

Dr Margaret Oates, Clinical Director, East Midlands Clinical Networks, Mental Health, Dementia & Neurological Conditions

Dr Mark Kellet, Clinical Lead, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and South Cumbria Strategic Clinical Network for Neurological Disorders, NHS England

Dr Neil Bindemann, Executive Director, Primary Care Neurology Society

Dr Nick Losseff, Clinical Director, London Neuroscience Strategic Clinical Network, NHS England

Dr Paul Goldsmith, Clinical Lead, Northern England Strategic Clinical Network, Mental Health, Dementia and Neurological Conditions, NHS England

Dr Peter Heywood, Lead for Neurology and Long Term Conditions South West Strategic Clinical Network, NHS England

Dr Zameel Cader, Clinical Director, Thames Valley Strategic Clinical Network, Mental Health, Dementia and Neurological Conditions, NHS England

Katherine Carpenter, Chair, Division of Neuropsychology (British Psychological Society)

Professor Adrian Williams, Clinical Director, West Midlands Clinical Networks, Mental Health, Dementia & Neurological Conditions, NHS England

Professor Chris Ward, Clinical Director, East Midlands Clinical Networks, Mental Health, Dementia & Neurological Conditions

Professor David Burn, Clinical Director, UK Parkinson's Excellence Network

Professor Graham Venables, Clinical Director, Yorkshire and the Humber Strategic Clinical Networks, NHS England

Professor Mary Reilly, President-elect, Association of British Neurologists

Professor Nigel Mathers, Honorary Secretary, Royal College of GPs

Professor Phil Smith, President, Association of British Neurologists

Professor Simon Shorvon, President, Joint Neurosciences Council