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Surgical royal colleges' joint statement on the junior doctors' contract

For immediate release

The Royal College of Surgeons of England, Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow have issued the following joint statement on the junior doctors' contract:

'The surgical colleges have been clear throughout negotiations that a contract must not be imposed. It is therefore extremely regrettable that negotiations on the junior doctors' contract have broken down and the Government is imposing a contract, particularly as it is reported that there remains only one significant area of disagreement.

'We are deeply concerned that this dispute has done long-term damage to the workforce. Low morale is connected not just to the specifics of the contract, but reflects deep-seated concerns about training and how doctors have lost confidence in their employers. Surgeons in training are becoming progressively disenchanted by their career structure.

'Our Colleges support reducing mortality at weekends. However, this contract alone will not resolve that issue not least because most junior doctors already work at weekends.

'We do, however, support the announcement of a review of junior doctors' long-standing concerns chaired by Professor Dame Sue Bailey who is a respected and independent clinician. This is long overdue. No stone should be left unturned in reviewing junior doctors' working lives in the search for solutions to the damage done, and a working environment where junior doctors often feel undervalued. There must also be a serious review of how contract negotiations can be de-politicised and improved for the future.

'Doctors in training are essential for the delivery of safe, high-quality patient care. The imposition of a contract takes us even further away from a goal to make the NHS the most attractive place in the world for doctors to work and risks permanent damage to the future of the medical workforce.'

Miss Clare Marx

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