Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

I congratulate both sides on returning to constructive negotiations and on reaching an agreement. I pay particular tribute to Professor Sue Bailey and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges for their role in bringing both sides together. I welcome the particular focus, alongside the negotiations around weekend pay, on all the other aspects that are blighting the lives of junior doctors. I welcome the recognition that we need to focus on those specialties that it is hard to recruit to and on those junior doctors who are working the longest hours, as well as the focus on patient safety.

However, we are not out of the woods yet. We need junior doctors across the country to vote for this agreement in a referendum. May I add my voice to that of the Opposition spokesman on health to say that what is needed now is a period of calm reflection? We need to build relationships with junior doctors into the future. Will the Secretary of State comment on his plans for building those relationships with our core workforce?

Jeremy Hunt The Secretary of State for Health

First, I very much agree with my hon. Friend in her thanks to Professor Dame Sue Bailey for the leadership that the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges has shown in the initiative that, in the end, made these talks and this agreement possible. I know it has been a very difficult and challenging time for the royal colleges, but Professor Bailey has shown real leadership in her initiative.

I also very much agree with my hon. Friend about the need to sort out some of the issues that have been frustrations for junior doctors—not just in the last few years, but going back decades—in terms of the way their training works and the flexibility of the system of six-month rotations that they work in. This is an opportunity to look at those wider issues. We started to look at some of them yesterday. I think there is more that we can do.

It is important that this is seen not as one side winning and the other side losing, but as a win-win. What the last 10 days show is that if we sit round the table, we can make real progress, with a better deal for patients and a better deal for doctors. That is the spirit that we want to go forward in.