I welcome the BMA’s suspension of next week’s damaging industrial action. It is clear from its statement that thousands of doctors had been in touch to say that they wanted to keep their patients safe. Doctors know that they cannot do so with full, rolling, five-day walkouts. Will the Secretary of State therefore join me in asking the BMA to ballot its members to hear their views before they proceed with the other proposed, damaging, five-day walkouts?

Jeremy Hunt The Secretary of State for Health

The BMA should talk to its members much more because, as far as I could tell, the consultation over the summer showed that only a minority actually wanted this extreme series of rolling one-week suspensions of labour that the BMA supported in the end. Most junior doctors are perplexed and worried about the situation and would love to find a solution. There was a bitter industrial dispute, but we actually started a process through which trust was being rebuilt on both sides. In a series of meetings, I met the junior doctors’ leader to talk through the areas of her greatest concern and we made progress in addressing two of those four outstanding areas. Building that trust means actually sitting around the table and talking, not having confrontational strikes. I think that that is what most junior doctors want.