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Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

One year on from the implementation of the European working time directive, there is evidence that patient care is suffering. Handovers have been inadequate in some cases, and junior doctors' training time has been reduced. Will my right hon. Friend reassure me that he will take action to allow some acute specialities to opt out of the European working time directive?

Andrew Lansley (Secretary of State: Health)

Yes. I am very clear that, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, we need to take the European working time directive back to the European Union. We need to discuss it again. We need to go to the European Union with the intention of maintaining the opt-out and of giving ourselves, not least in the health context, the flexibility that we lack, so that junior doctors, in particular, have the capacity to undertake the training that they need. It is not that we want to go back to the past, when there were excessive hours-100-hour weeks and so on-but we want junior doctors to be confident that they will get the training that they require in the period allocated for training.

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