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03 JUN 2010

Dear Fiona,

I am writing in response to the issues you raised with Andy Burnham MP in your letter of 19 February and on behalf of Dr Ranganathan Iyer and colleagues at Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

I know that Departmental officials had been considering this matter prior to the election. As we have discussed, I am very much concerned by the issues raised and the future of the Trust.

On the allegations of financial irregularities and Monitor's assessment of the Foundation Trust application, I have been given a copy of a letter from Monitor to Dr Iyer explaining the regulator's position and which I have enclosed. Monitor is an independent organisation directly accountable to Parliament and is responsible for authorising Foundation Trusts and overseeing their performance. These are therefore matters for Monitor to consider as it has done. I note that Monitor offered a meeting but that Dr Iyer has not accepted the invitation and the opportunity to provide evidence to substantiate the claims.

Please be assured that, like you and your constituents, I would like to see the board at Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust stabilising the trust's financial position and protecting quality of care. Although Monitor took action to require changes to the governance of the trust, the challenge is to return the trust to financial recovery and this is being actively addressed. Senior officials in my Department are continuing to discuss issues relating to the medium to long-term future of the trust with Monitor. I will take a personal interest in this; and I will seek an early opportunity to visit the Trust, including a meeting with the Consultants. In doing so, I must make it clear that I will not seek to undermine the Trust's governance, nor Monitor's regulatory responsibility. I will seek to offer support from my Department.

*Yours sincerely,
Andrew Lansley*

ANDREW LANSLEY CBE