Dear Dr Bruno Holthof

Reviewing your results from the national training surveys 2018

I’m writing to all chairs and chief executives of trusts in England to highlight some of the key findings from our annual surveys of doctors in training and trainers. I would be grateful if you could also share this letter with medical directors and those responsible for the delivery of medical education in your organisation.

You can access your organisation’s results in our online reporting tool and read a short summary report of initial trends at www.gmc-uk.org/nts-2018.

The surveys give us a detailed perspective on the quality of medical education and training provided by trusts and boards across the UK. The data they generate are a powerful quality assurance tool, providing information we use to identify good practice and pinpoint the places where training doesn't meet our Promoting excellence standards. The results also provide you, and all local education providers, with evidence to tackle issues reported by trainees and trainers in your organisations.

The findings from the 2018 surveys reinforce the strong feedback we’ve heard in our face-to-face engagement with the profession throughout this year. Doctors, of all grades and specialties, have expressed deep concerns about the impact of system pressures on medical practice. We want to work with you, and all those involved in postgraduate training, to enhance support for doctors and improve patient safety.

What the survey results tell us

Many doctors told us that long and intense working hours, heavy workloads and the challenges of frontline medical practice are affecting their training experiences and personal wellbeing:

- Two in five trainees and two-thirds of trainers rated the intensity of their work as very heavy or heavy; and nearly half of trainees reported that they work beyond their rostered hours on a daily or weekly basis.
Around a third of doctors in training and trainers said that training opportunities are still lost to rota gaps.

A third of trainers strongly disagreed or disagreed that they were able to use their allocated time in their role as trainer.

One in five trainees and trainers reported feeling short of sleep during work on a daily or weekly basis.

This year’s survey also included new questions to help us better understand the extent of burnout amongst doctors in training and trainers. The results show that nearly a quarter of trainees and just over a fifth of trainers feel burnt out because of their work, and almost a third of trainees said that they are often or always exhausted at the thought of another shift. While data on burnout for individual organisations isn’t included in our online reporting tool this year - as the questions are being tested - more information about overall trends is available in our initial findings report.

What we need from you

It’s absolutely critical that all local education providers meet their obligation to protect time for training. Our Promoting excellence standards are very clear - trainees must be educated in high quality, safe and effective environments, where trainers are also well supported in their roles. I thought it would be helpful to remind you of some of our key requirements for organisations responsible for educating and training doctors in the UK:

■ **R1.12:** Organisations must design rotas to:
  - make sure doctors in training have appropriate clinical supervision
  - support doctors in training to develop the professional values, knowledge, skills and behaviours required of all doctors working in the UK
  - provide learning opportunities that allow doctors in training to meet the requirements of their curriculum and training programme
  - give doctors in training access to educational supervisors
  - minimise the adverse effects of fatigue and workload.

■ **R2.1:** Organisations must have effective, transparent and clearly understood educational governance systems and processes to manage or control the quality of medical education and training.

■ **R3.2:** Learners must have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing, and to educational and pastoral support, including:
  - confidential counselling services
  - careers advice and support
  - occupational health services.

■ **R4.2:** Trainers must have enough time in job plans to meet their educational responsibilities so that they can carry out their role in a way that promotes safe and effective care and a positive learning experience.
We expect you, your governance board and senior leaders to scrutinise the results of the national training surveys and your organisation’s rota designs to identify and quickly act on any areas of concern. We encourage you to involve your trainees, trainers and guardian of safe working in reviewing your data, so they’re clear on how their feedback has been used to resolve local issues.

As Foundation 1 and Foundation 2 posts have recently started, I’d also particularly highlight your responsibility to ensure that trainees receive appropriate induction for their role:

- **R1.13**: Organisations must make sure learners have an induction in preparation for each placement that clearly sets out:
  - their duties and supervision arrangements
  - their role in the team
  - how to gain support from senior colleagues
  - the clinical or medical guidelines and workplace policies they must follow
  - how to access clinical and learning resources.

**Working together to protect training**

We recognise that this is a challenging time for frontline health services, which is why we have asked those responsible for allocating healthcare funding across the UK to look at the issues raised by the surveys, and ensure suitable provision is made for education and training.

We’re committed to working collaboratively with everyone involved in postgraduate medical training to act on the results of this year’s surveys. Although a number of issues have been raised, we also want to recognise that the majority of trainees remain satisfied with their overall educational experience. This is testament to the dedication of trainers and those in your organisation who work hard to provide doctors with a positive training experience.

If you have any questions about the national training surveys or our standards for medical education and training, please don’t hesitate to contact our surveys team at NTS@gmc-uk.org.

Yours sincerely,

Charlie Massey
Chief Executive and Registrar