



Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
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7th September 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you on behalf of staff working for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to express our deep concern at the planned staffing reduction in the Agency, and the drastic implications this will have both for staff, for our healthcare regulatory regime and ultimately the public.

In recent months ministers have rightly praised staff at the MHRA for the way in which they have responded to the pandemic. It was thanks to the dedication and hard work of our members that the vaccines were able to be approved swiftly and batch-released so that the vaccination drive could begin rapidly and with confidence, not to mention the approval of other medicines for the prevention and treatment of acute COVID-19 infection, testing kits and ventilators.

It will therefore come as a shock to the public to learn that the MHRA is facing staffing cuts of 20% or more as a consequence of the loss of income from EU workstreams and the government's failure to replace this funding or introduce a sustainable financial model.

This staffing reduction comes despite the increased workload of the Agency in operating an independent regulatory regime in the wake of our exit from the European Union.

Fewer staff will therefore be asked to cover more ground with fewer resources, all whilst operating under a pay freeze.

We have been told that efficiencies will be found with improved processes and technology, but we have not seen any evidence of this, and the staff cuts will come well before any efficiencies are realised.

The case for change is indisputable given the UK's exit from the EU, Baroness Cumberlege's recommendations, and the need to ensure ongoing resilience in the face of further pandemic threats. This change must be robust and evidence-based if MHRA is to be a world class organisation; it must not be led by the money.

Staff at the MHRA are highly skilled and we are deeply concerned that these cuts will lead to an exodus of talented staff from the Agency at exactly the time when we need them the most.

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We are therefore concerned that the quality of our regulatory decisions may suffer as a result, with a negative effect on our ability to protect public health and patient safety; due to either long delays in approving new medicines and medical devices as a sovereign regulator, a reduction in the level of scrutiny of national applications or the Agency being restricted to 'rubber stamping' EU regulatory decisions due to resource constraints.

Recent months have taught us the value of having a world class medical regulator that is able to respond quickly to emerging health challenges. It would be reckless to put this at risk by imposing such severe staffing cuts on the organisation.

We are therefore writing to ask if you will meet with trade unions representing MHRA staff to discuss this issue and if you will make representations as part of the spending review to provide the MHRA with the necessary short-term funding to enable a meaningful review of functions, structure and financial sustainability, without imposing drastic staffing cuts at the same time.

Yours sincerely,

Mike Clancy, General Secretary, Prospect

Dave Penman, General Secretary, FDA

Mark Serwotka, General Secretary, PCS

Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary, Unite

Jo Grady, General Secretary, UCU