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Business, Energy
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Dear Baroness Brown,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee on 23 May to provide evidence on the Committee's inquiry: *Delivering a UK science and technology strategy*. I committed to write to the Committee following the session.

Lord Winston raised an important concern about securing the future of clinical academics who are of consultant level but who are struggling to undertake publicly funded research due to pressures in the health service. As the NHS Long Term Plan sets out, patients benefit enormously from research and innovation with 'research-active' hospitals having lower mortality rates. Research and innovation also help to drive future medical advances, which benefit patients and the UK economy.

All UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Councils offer funding and support across a wide range of disciplines and areas and there are a number of flexibilities and allowances considered for grants and funding programmes which are set out in the relevant terms and conditions for each. The Medical Research Council (MRC) invests around £25 million each year in supporting clinical academics at all career stages through its training programmes. MRC is aware that clinical researchers often face pressure to take on additional clinical duties, reducing the time they have available to undertake research. This is actively discouraged, and the terms and conditions of MRC awards make it clear that award holders supported by the funding may not work more than the agreed time commitment for clinical duties.

Where MRC becomes aware however of researchers having to take on additional duties, they work with award holders to extend their awards where appropriate. The terms and conditions also state that the award holders must abide by the 'UK clinical academic training in medicine and dentistry: principles and obligations'. This outlines that those responsible for clinical academic training should ensure that clinical trainees have sufficient protected time for research.

During the pandemic MRC, in coordinated partnership with other members of the Clinical Academic Training Forum (CATF – details below), temporarily suspended a number of awards in recognition that research activities had to stop. This flexibility has enabled clinical researchers to restart their research activities when demands on the clinical service reduced. More widely, as a member of CATF, MRC works with a range of stakeholders interested in the training of clinical academics to provide strategic coordination of clinical academic training pathways in the UK.

The Clinical Academic Training Forum (CATF) works with a range of stakeholders interested in the training of clinical academics to provide strategic coordination of clinical academic training pathways in the UK. Members of CATF include The Academy of Medical Sciences, Association of Medical Research Charities, Cancer Research UK, Conference of Postgraduate Medical Deans of the United Kingdom, Medical Schools Council, Medical Research Council, Health Education England, NIHR, The Royal College of Physicians, and The Wellcome Trust.

This complements the wider work of the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) which, as you will know, is the UK's largest funder of health and care research. In 2021-22 the NIHR funded 2954 training and career development awards, complementing the additional NIHR investment in world-class research facilities and a skilled research delivery workforce.

The NIHR offer attractive career paths and pay researchers salaries, including part time offers allowing researchers to remain clinically active. Awards and opportunities are available to medics and other healthcare practitioner professionals to undertake research at consultant level, including the NIHR Research Professorships, NIHR Fellowships at Doctoral and Advanced Post-doctoral level. There are also opportunities for consultants to undertake research with the NIHR partnership programmes, including the NIHR/Health Education Integrated Clinical Academic Programme for nurses, midwives, allied health professionals and health care scientists and also with MRC for the Clinical Academic Research Partnership.

In addition, the NIHR Academy plays a pivotal role in attracting, training and supporting the best health and care researchers as well as providing career support and advice, access to leadership development opportunities, networking events, mentoring and guidance on research funding.

Finally, you asked for an update on appointments for the Chair and Chief Executive of Advanced Research and Invention Agency. Further details on both appointments will be announced in the coming weeks and I will keep the Committee informed of any developments.

I hope this is helpful and I look forward to continuing to work with the Committee going forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kwasi Kwarteng', written in a cursive style.

RT HON KWASI KWARTENG MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy