

Supplementary written evidence submitted by the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh (CSV0059)

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chair of the Health and Social Care Select Committee

Dear Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP

I am writing to express my gratitude to you for the opportunity to speak to the House of Commons Health and Social Care Select Committee last week. I was pleased to be able to put across the perspective of the College and of our members and fellows across England on the important issue of improving the performance of NHS England's cancer services.

I would also like to make an additional point that I was unable to speak to due to time constraints during the session, which is the importance of protecting surgical training. The pause in elective care during the pandemic means that we have lost thousands of training opportunities in surgery. This was exacerbated by the use of the private sector, who very rarely allow trainees to be present during procedures. We do not have figures specifically for cancer surgery, but in orthopaedics we lost approximately 210,000 training opportunities in 2020 alone. As surgery is a craft skill it is not possible to replace this with online learning and therefore these training opportunities need to be replaced if we are to avoid a gap in the pipeline of surgeons coming through.

If there is no training today, there is no surgery tomorrow. As we face the backlog of operations it is extremely important that we build training into our plans for the recovery of elective care, including when looking at new pathways for cancer referrals and operations. If we do not do so we will face workforce capacity issues in the future.

If I or the College, which has 30,000 Members and Fellows, can be of any help to you going forward, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

With best wishes,
Prof. Mike Griffin OBE
President

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