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The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
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Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to you regarding the recent press coverage of the new guidance entitled 'saying sorry' which has been issued to hospitals by the Health Litigation Authority.

As Chair of a community interest company, Restorative Solutions cic, I strongly support this new approach of being open, candid and transparent with patients. Since 2007 Restorative Solutions has been putting in place the capability - and building the capacity – for staff and volunteers across all sectors to tackle harm and conflicts in the workplace and community. Our work has resulted in restorative approaches being adopted to provide a means of making, maintaining and repairing relationships and for fostering a sense of responsibility and shared accountability. The evidence base within the justice sector demonstrates the powerful outcomes that restorative approaches can achieve for victims – where 85% and above satisfaction rates have been achieved.

Within the health sector the recognition and use of restorative approaches to date has been limited. We believe that with your commitment and support we can begin to demonstrate to providers of health services that investment in restorative approaches can bring substantial transformation in the culture and practice across the range of health services. There are parallels from other sectors that we can draw upon in defining the potential benefits of applying restorative approaches for patients, these are:

- Patients being listened to and able to participate in key decision making where possible
- Positive relationships between patients and their carers
- Making sure that decisions and actions are in the interests of the patient
- Greater confidence in the healthcare being provided
- Improvement in the wellbeing of patients following resolution of conflict

For the change in culture and practice to be achieved, we have learnt that there needs to be a strong level of commitment from senior management within organisations. Critically, staff will also require awareness of and training in restorative approaches so that the following benefits can be realised:

- Early identification of problems/conflicts and resolution through RA thus pre-empting and rendering formal complaints unnecessary
- Decrease in the number of patient complaints and improvement in satisfaction
- Improvement in staff morale: reduction in staff sickness and increase in positive working relationships
- Reduced number of compensation claims.

To enable this transformation in attitudes and behaviours we propose that a set of pathfinder projects be established. Through this we can build awareness, understanding and most importantly gain the evidence of the impact of introducing restorative approaches across the health service. Clinical Commissioning Groups would acquire the necessary information to be able to integrate this approach into the services they provide.

We are currently working across England and Wales on a programme of work to embed restorative approaches across the justice sector. This work could provide a useful infrastructure from which we can also support local health services in becoming capable of undertaking the necessary steps for transforming the relationship between staff and patients.

We would welcome a discussion with you regarding our work to date and our ideas to support the health sector in becoming a restorative profession that builds positive relationships with its patients.

Yours sincerely



Sir Charles Pollard