

19/04/2021

The voice of frontline doctors

Dear Colleagues

CC. Sir Robert Francis QC, Rt Hon Matt Hancock, Sir Simon Stevens, Dr Nikita Kanani,

We were very concerned to read the recent report in [The Times](#), which states that patients are increasingly having a negative experience in terms of accessing their GP, leading to increased attendances to Emergency Departments.

This report from [HealthWatch](#) confirms the health of the nation is suffering as general practice is [drowning](#). Our experience as Frontline GPs, is that demand is going through the roof.

General practice is currently carrying out [7 million appointments per week](#), while delivering [75% of all Covid vaccinations](#) and the largest ever flu-vaccination programme to date. Compared to pre-pandemic, primary care is offering a million more appointments per week.

If primary care is having contact with 10% of the population each week and this is still not meeting demand there must be an urgent review to find out why.

The introduction of e-consults has made us more accessible than ever, and has opened the gates to a lot of trivia, which still uses GP time and resources, sometimes inappropriately.

GPs are working flat out, and it is incredibly demoralising to find that our best is not enough. It is clearly not acceptable for huge proportions of patients to attend ED, when GP would be more appropriate. However, Practices are working at and beyond full capacity which has led to [unprecedented levels](#) of burnout, sick leave and tiredness amongst GPs.

General Practice has been consistently underfunded over the last 10 years. Currently 90% of NHS contacts happen within [primary care](#) for less than 10% of the total budget. We desperately need a huge funding increase to aid much needed innovation, improvements in IT and infrastructure, and to increase staffing levels.

We urgently call today for a reduction in bureaucracy, a focus on GP burnout and staff retention, and most importantly an analysis into why patients are struggling to access care so we can work towards finding a solution that involves the whole health service working together.

We would welcome a collaboration on this issue and would be happy to meet to discuss the views of our members to find a way forward together.

We look forward to your response

Dr Elizabeth Toberty

Dr Ellen Welch

On behalf of The GP Committee

Doctors' Association UK