

Worcestershire and Herefordshire Local Medical Committees Ltd

Our Ref: GF/LJC/6175

18th May 2021

Worcestershire MPs

Dear MP,

I am writing to you to express my deep concern regarding the pressures facing general practice and the expectations from the public at the current time in the hope that you will support us in demanding that government ensures that general practice is adequately resourced and supported in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Colleagues have had to deal with negative press articles in national and local media over recent months suggesting that general practice has been closed for business throughout the pandemic. This has left many GPs and their staff feeling demoralised and under appreciated. Practice staff now face abuse from patients on a regular basis fuelled by the perception portrayed in the media that we are not doing our job properly. We have worked to a total triage model as dictated by NHS England. We have worked remotely where possible as we were instructed to do, but we have always seen patients face to face depending on clinical need. This approach has kept our patients safe and has reduced staff sickness allowing us to continue to deliver care to our patients. Staff are now exhausted and demand has soared in recent months. The truth about the level of care provided by general practice is evidenced by the data below:

Data released by NHS England showed that over 451,000 appointments were delivered by practices across Worcestershire and Herefordshire during March. Over 241,000 of those appointments were carried out face to face, and a further 3,191 patients were visited at home. National appointment data published in May showed that there were 3 million more appointments across England (up 11%) in March this year, than the same time in 2019 prior to the pandemic.

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We are struggling to manage increasing numbers of patients in the community as a result of significant delays for hospital referrals and treatment. Practices continue to roll out the covid vaccination programme for the benefit of our population. We still need to make best use of different consultation styles such as online / remote consultations in an attempt to keep on top of rocketing demand. We continue to be tied to strict infection control procedures and we need to ensure that both practices and staff remain safe but that care is delivered swiftly to those who most need it. All of this is a huge challenge for our practices as new covid variants threaten potential further waves of infection. It was, therefore, a final blow to many colleagues to have received a letter from NHS England advising that practices should offer face to face appointments routinely irrespective of clinical need should patients wish it. I would be grateful if you could take a moment to read the response to that letter from our GPC Chair Dr Richard Vautrey as we share the sentiments in his letter:

<https://bma-mail.org.uk/t/JVX-7DEEO-EC5E0CEA0D8A5317JCJOU4BA186991484320BE/cr.aspx>

I fear for the survival of general practice in its current form if this approach is allowed to continue. There now needs to be an honest conversation with the public about what we can realistically offer at the current time and there needs to be sufficient resource allocated to general practice to allow us to give patients the service that they want and need over the coming months. I very much hope that you will stand alongside us in fighting for this.

Yours sincerely



Dr G Farmer
Worcestershire LMC Secretary