

Rt. Hon. Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

26 February 2021

Dear Chancellor,

RE: Investing in general practice to enable COVID-19 recovery

Ahead of next week's Budget, we are writing to ask you to continue to invest in general practice at this crucial stage in the COVID-19 crisis, and as we turn our attention to addressing the challenges of a post-pandemic NHS. Throughout the pandemic, general practice has remained open, providing vital care to patients, with primary care teams playing a leading role in the largest vaccination programme in the history of the NHS, delivering 75% of COVID-19 vaccinations so far.

The success of the COVID-19 vaccination programme to date has been underpinned by the investment in the Enhanced Service (ES) in general practice, as well as other essential funding. It was supported by the vitally important £150 million COVID Capacity Fund (from October 2020 to the end of March 2021) to enable workforce expansion and help practices working on the seven COVID-19 priority areas. Additional funding for PCN clinical directors, has also been made available, which recognises the significant role they and those who work with them have played in the delivery of the vaccination programme, as well as additional funding for specific purposes (vaccinating care home residents and housebound patients etc).

While vaccination of the first nine priority cohorts is not expected to be completed until at least Easter, and the Government's aim is now to vaccinate every adult over the age of 18 by the end of July, the clinical director funding and the £150 million/£30m per month COVID Capacity Fund are currently only available up to the end of March, and are spread very thinly for multiple purposes. We are clear that these funds must be extended, and further funding be provided to enable general practice to continue to deliver an effective and rapid vaccination programme, alongside continuing to deliver routine services to patients in need.

While GPs and their teams have rapidly transformed service delivery to protect patients by delivering a high proportion of care remotely, many patients continue to require face-to-face care. I am sure you will agree that it is crucial that nationally funded PPE continues to be provided for general practice, for as long as it remains recommended for health and care settings.

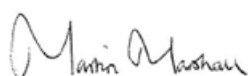
The nation's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will not be possible without sufficient and sustained investment in the general practice workforce and its estate. We urgently need the Government to deliver on its promise for 6,000 more GPs and 26,000 other staff in general practice to enable us to effectively manage the impact of COVID-19, on top of long-term NHS pressures. While Health Education England received a £260 million spending uplift through November's Comprehensive

Spending Review, this falls far short of what is required to meet all the necessary commitments, including sustainably funding the expansion of GP training agreed in the 2020 GP contract, which alone is forecasted to cost £181 million. Government must ensure that HEE has the funding it needs to deliver on commitments to expand the GP and wider general practice workforce. Additional investment in the primary care estate and digital infrastructure will also be needed to capitalise on this expanding workforce, by ensuring they have sufficient facilities to meet patient needs.

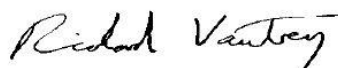
As we continue to move out of the pandemic emergency and continue managing COVID-19 patients in the community, we ask that you urgently invest in general practice at next month's Budget.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Martin Marshall
Chair of RCGP Council



Dr Richard Vautrey
Chair of BMA General Practitioners Committee