

September 26th 2014

OPEN LETTER FROM GENERAL PRACTICE IN COVENTRY AND RUGBY

GP surgeries across Coventry and Rugby are at breaking point: we are under unsustainable pressure from a combination of rising workload and falling resources, and are left facing a workforce crisis, with many local doctors unable to offer the services the public want and they want to offer.

We are proud that the NHS is considered by international experts to still provide the highest quality and efficient healthcare, despite receiving almost the lowest level of funding. The bedrock of the NHS is general practice with 19 out of every 20 patient consultations being dealt with in general practice alone.

However, general practices like ours, are being frustrated by the rising number of factors which are impacting on services and undermining our ability to do our best for those who need us.

We are unable to cope with the current pressure on the health service, and understand entirely why our patients are becoming frustrated at the lack of appointments and delays getting the treatment they need.

Demand is continuing to rise but the Government has failed to provide the support that local GP practices need to offer their patients the time and care they require. We desperately need more GPs, more practice staff and more nurses to meet demand and provide the care our patients deserve.

340 million GP consultations are now undertaken every year in England, an increase of 40 million since 2008. The average member of the public now sees a GP almost six times every year – twice as much as a decade ago. The average time a GP spends with each patient is now just under 12 minutes compared with just over eight minutes in 1993, highlighting the increasing complexity of managing more long-term conditions that patients are living with.

The needs of patients visiting their GP practice have also changed considerably. For example in England 15 million people now live with a chronic condition. Care for patients with chronic diseases, such as diabetes and asthma, previously carried out in hospital settings is now increasingly being provided solely through GP services.

The issues facing general practice have had a detrimental and worrying effect on GP recruitment, and are resulting in a workforce crisis. Young doctors are no longer choosing general practice as a career and about a fifth of GP training places are unfilled this year.

Several established GPs are leaving Coventry to work in other countries. The number of GPs has fallen by 3% over the past few years. Six out of 10 GPs are considering early retirement, while a quarter are considering quitting the medical profession all together, owing to the pressures they are under.

Despite the ever increasing workload in terms of both quantity and complexity there has been year on year underinvestment in general practice and many practices no longer have enough staff, resources or adequate buildings to provide patients with the care that they need. The proportion of NHS funding supporting general practice in England has fallen from 10.4% in 2005/6 to 7.47% in 2012/13.

Because of these issues facing general practice the British Medical Association (BMA) has launched the “Your GP Cares” campaign.

We are reaching an incredibly important moment for general practice. We can either face up to the realities facing GPs and make plans now to meet the growing challenges – or we can bury our heads in the sand and watch this key part of the NHS slide into permanent decline.

We are asking the public to show their support by reading the “Your GP Cares” leaflets and posters at their surgeries, signing the epetition at <http://bma.org.uk/working-for-change/your-gp-cares> , and by writing to their MP.

Yours sincerely

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