

Urgent prescription for general practice: contacting your local paper

The recent survey of practices across England and Wales reflects the challenges faced by general practice, from managing workload to recruiting new GPs and other staff. The BMA is producing heatmaps to show the areas which are hardest hit around:

- Practice workload
- Quality of service practices are able to deliver to patients
- Demand for appointments
- Long-term vacancies
- Finding locum cover
- Retirement from general practice
- Financial viability of the practice

By displaying a poster in the waiting room or encouraging your patients to complete the Prescription Postcards, you are already raising awareness of these challenges locally. You can also raise the issue with your local newspaper through the letters page, which in turn may encourage them to look at the local challenges facing general practice in more detail.

To help you do that, here is a template letter for you to send to your local newspaper. The most effective letters are those which reflect your own story, rather than a generic national picture, so be sure to share your experience and to stress your links with the local area.

Suggested template letter for publication

Sir,

General practice in <TOWN>

General practice has been at the heart of the NHS since it began almost 70 years ago, but sadly, it's time to face reality; GPs in <TOWN> and across the country are struggling to cope with falling funding, rising workload and staff shortages.

At my practice, I feel these pressures every day; <EXAMPLE OF PRESSURES FACING YOUR PRACTICE OR LOCAL AREA – E.G. WORKLOAD, NOT LONG ENOUGH WITH PATIENTS, FALLING RESOURCES>

Already, surgeries are closing across the country, with 72 practices closing last year, because there is an exodus of GPs retiring early or quitting for jobs overseas. With one in three GPs considering retirement in the next five years, and more than 600 GP trainee vacancies left unfilled, the government must act quickly to ensure general practice has a safe and sustainable future, and patients receive the high-level of care they deserve.

I echo the British Medical Association calls for increased funding, less box ticking, and more practice staff, to ensure that GPs have a safe, manageable workload, and are able to spend more time with patients. We understand patient's frustrations at the lack of appointments or delays the treatment they need, but the pressures facing general practice are no longer sustainable. It is time for the government to give GP practices the resources and capacity they need to meet the challenges that are currently threatening to overwhelm the entire service.

Yours faithfully,

<NAME>

<TITLE AND AREA WHERE YOU WORK>

