

E: publicaffairs@bma.org.uk

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

18 May 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

RE. Urgent meeting request - essential support needed for general practice

I write to express the widespread anger, frustration and disappointment of the general practice workforce and request an urgent meeting with you to discuss how the government can rapidly support general practice and its patients during the coming months.

It is beyond doubt that general practice is under unparalleled pressure, delivering a far greater number of consultations than at the same time two years ago. Demand for services has increased significantly through use of additional means of patient communication, including e-consultations, alongside responding to vaccination, shielding and COVID-19 issues. GPs and their teams have worked tirelessly to meet this need, alongside delivering COVID-19 vaccinations quickly and effectively, which has brought benefit for the whole nation. However, they are now also tackling the huge NHS backlog, all while GP recruitment and retention is nowhere near the levels needed.

Despite the incredible work done by GPs and their teams over the last year to care for our patients, practices and GP out-of-hours services do not feel supported by government or NHS England/ Improvement (NHSEI). This feeling is further exacerbated by sections of the media reporting that practices are to blame for not seeing all patients in face-to-face consultations. Practices have been open to their patients throughout the pandemic, and at least half of all appointments have been delivered in person. This is something that should be celebrated, but instead the profession has been badly let down, and become increasingly demoralised by the suggestion that they are failing their patients by following the government and NHSEI's guidelines and implementing triage so patients get the right care. As a result growing numbers of practices are reporting that their staff are being verbally, and at times physically threatened with abuse. We risk losing much needed and dedicated staff as a result. This is completely unacceptable and should be condemned by yourself, wider government and NHSEI in the strongest possible terms.

The NHSEI letter of 14 May shows a worrying disconnect with the reality facing general practice. Clinicians are delivering face-to-face appointments, but can only do so when it is safe for our patients. Face-to-face consultations are at the heart of good general practice, but we need real

Registered as a Company limited by Guarantee. Registered No. 8848 England.
Registered office: BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP.

Listed as a Trade Union under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974.



British Medical Association
bma.org.uk

INQ000097897_0001