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Dear patients,

LETTER TO PATIENTS ABOUT SAFE WORKING IN GENERAL PRACTICE

We write on behalf of your GP surgery, as the official representative body of GPs across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. We exist by government statute to represent, advise, and support General Practice.

We have been working closely with the British Medical Association (BMA) to help support patient care at a time that is proving to be extremely difficult for general practice. Years of government underfunding has led to a workforce crisis that risks to the ability of practices to provide safe care for their patients.

Aren't all GPs well paid? Why are we in this situation?

Practices are mostly small to medium businesses run by GPs and they take earnings from the money paid to them for their work and earn what is left over once they have paid all staff, building costs, utilities and tax. There has been no significant uplift to pay for general practice for many years with rising costs as we have all experienced in our personal lives. This can affect small businesses severely. Most of the money paid to GP practices by the government is paid based on how many patients they have registered, not on how many times patients are seen or on how much work they do.

If the business fails to keep up with the costs it faces it will eventually stop functioning. Practices are finding it hard to keep up with demands on its service and provide an affordable service. When the practice is overwhelmed it has to change how it works to ensure that patients get safe care. Practices want to provide safe, high quality care without exhausting the people trying to provide you with this care.

How can we as patients help?

Please tell the practice as much as possible about your needs so that they can get you what you need. Your practice is dedicated to helping you to get the right care at the right time for you but needs to fully understand what you are asking help with.

Why are we being asked to see somebody else, not a GP?

Sometimes there are other professionals better suited to provide your care than the GP and your practice will always prioritise your care according to your needs and ensure that you see the right person/service. We are in a situation where there is a recruitment crisis in general practice and so practices are having to move away from the days of everybody seeing a GP. Various sources of research suggest that several patients contact the practice asking to see a GP where their needs would be better met by somebody else.

What happens when all appointments have been filled?

When a practice has reached its safe capacity on a day, they are likely to advise you of alternative routes to take to get care if you cannot wait to be seen. They may make exceptions to this depending on the situation when you call but all practices have a finite capacity to see people each day and can only provide what they have available to them.

We hear that some practices may introduce waiting lists, can they do this?

Some practices may introduce a waiting list for non-urgent appointments rather than ask you to call back the next morning, this is to stop you from having to keep calling the practice.

This is commonplace outside of general practices but as yet rare to see in surgeries.

How can I find out more about this?

If you want to know more about the move to safe working you can access the BMA guidance at <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/managing-workload/safe-working-in-general-practice>

We would like to work with your Patient Participation Group at the practice and the surgery to help to understand why the practice is having to change how it works. Please do talk to the PPG to discuss the situation.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Wright
Chief Executive
Nottinghamshire Local Medical Committee (Ltd)