**Irvinestown Health Centre**

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***Dr. E.D.J.Haigney, Dr C.Sprice, Dr L.McDonnell***

24th April 2024

**Dear Patient**

**The NHS is in crisis.**

* We’re seeing 20% more patients than before the pandemic
* We’re seeing more than 1 million patients per day
* Hospital waiting lists are increasing, meaning patients come back to us
* Primary care is the foundation of the health service, providing around 95% of the care people need throughout their life, yet the March 2024 Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report into GP access revealed that general practice received just **5.4%** of the total health and social care spend in 2022-23 [rcgpni-retention-strategy-2024.pdf](https://www.rcgp.org.uk/getmedia/f1c47735-a896-45a4-900f-1532c8105e24/rcgpni-retention-strategy-2024.pdf)

Our costs are rising, just as yours are – electricity, estates, supplies, paying our staff – yet we receive no additional funding or grants. We are all struggling to stay afloat. If this continues, your local practice may disappear. Our aim is to protect our practice and the services provided to our patients to prevent this happening.

At Irvinestown Health Centre we are feeling the pressure and are working as hard as we can to provide the right care for our patients.

We are unable to recruit more staff and cannot fund replacement of new staff which will mean for you:

* we have to set daily capacity limits to keep you and our staff safe

[bma-ni-gp-safe-working-guidance.pdf](https://www.bma.org.uk/media/7734/bma-ni-gp-safe-working-guidance.pdf)

* wait times for appointments are longer.
* we may not be able to respond as quickly to requests
* medical reports, assessments or complaints may take longer

Other NHS services can help ease the pressure, so you maybe be signposted to other community healthcare professionals such as your local pharmacy or Optician. Please do take advantage of these options.

Please help us free up clinical time by trying to self-manage any minor illnesses, visiting the pharmacy first and by attending health checks when invited to which aim to help keep you well at home. [Symptom checkers - DOH/HSCNI Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG)](https://online.hscni.net/symptom-checkers/)

We are worried and distressed about the current situation and wish we could do more.

We would encourage you to raise the issue of General Practice funding with your local MLA who can lobby the Government for change.

In the meantime, we will continue to do our best to support our patients and we appreciate your support and consideration during these difficult times.

Yours sincerely,

Dr E Haigney

Dr Sprice

Dr McDonnell