

Practices plea to their patients

The problem

You may have read that there is a crisis in General Practice; your local GPs wanted to collectively explain more about this so that you can understand what is going on.

One of our worries about sharing these concerns with you is that it will cause panic, and that it might stop those people who really need a GP from actually trying to see one. We are not trying to do either of these things, however the situation really has reached a crisis point and if we do not share the problem with you, the problem will only worsen.

We are also worried that you might think that it is just your particular practice that is suffering and choose to register elsewhere. Whilst all practices are different and we fully support patient choice, the reality is that all practices countywide are facing these issues.

To reassure you for the present there is a sufficient number of GPs, nurses and practice staff to provide care, however we are acutely aware that the situation is precarious and we need to work together as a community in order to overcome the challenge.

The causes

With more and more people in the population living with more illnesses, living for longer, the overall workload is increasing.

Unfortunately, the increase in workload is outstripping the increase in workforce. This is exacerbating the workforce issue; the workforce is also ageing and retiring; many of the remaining GPs are leaving the profession due to the overwhelming stress. And any potential new GPs are seeing broken, burnt out GPs and are not choosing to become GPs.

Potential solutions

We must all use the resources we have to their best effect.

What GP practices are doing for your community

As GPs we are doing everything we can to ensure that we operate efficient practices, so

that we can deliver the essential services required to keep our community well.

Because we are struggling to recruit GPs, we are using different staff to do some of the tasks, including receptionists, Nurses, nurse practitioners, emergency care practitioners, pharmacists and working more closely with social care and ambulance services to ensure that everyone is using their limited resources to the best effect.

We are also focusing on prioritizing the essential services and delivering clinical care; this may mean that you have to wait for non-urgent workload e.g. medical reports, sick notes and prescriptions.

What can you do for your community?

We also need our local population to play their part and use resources wisely.

Self-care

- Sometimes the pharmacist may be able to answer your query or advise on self-care
- There is a wealth of healthcare advice from www.nhs.uk
- Be considerate towards staff

Be patient patients, please. This is crisis management; we are doing everything we can to ensure that we do not have to reduce essential core services within our local health centres, which could mean patients having to travel to local hospitals for certain consultations.

Use appointments wisely

- Missed appointments- cancel if you do not need it so someone else can use it
- Be patient- you are not our only patient; Doctors treat patients in order of clinical need;
bear this in mind, one day it may be you that needs that undivided priority attention.
- Be prepared - Use the BMA 10 tips to prepare for your appointment.

Be organized with your script requests

Home visits- for every home visit we do we could potentially see at least three patients in the surgery; for reasons of illness we will visit, but if it is due to lack of someone to bring you down please ask a neighbor, or take a taxi.

Use online facilities where possible

- Booking
- Cancelling appointments
- Prescription requests

Get involved

Ultimately, we want to work with our patients going forward, if you would like a stronger say please get involved and join the local Patient Participation Groups.

One local PPG chairman sums up their involvement nicely:

*"Ian Gall, Chair of the Patient Participation Group (PPG) believes that as patients are at the heart of the NHS, "Each one of us needs to take more responsibility for our own health and medical conditions. The days of 'see the GP' for everything have gone. We have a wide range of health professionals across the surgeries, pharmacies, and online advice available; therefore, it **is** essential that we make better and more appropriate use of these, leaving GP appointments for those who really need them. This is a key area where patients can make a difference in the current climate. As a PPG we are committed to working with the patients and the practice to continue to deliver safe and effective healthcare in all four of our surgeries."*