PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**General Practice in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland is in crisis and asks patients for their understanding and help**

General practice is in crisis, and is asking patients to change the way they treat the service.

Before the pandemic general practice was already in decline due to decades of underinvestment. The number of practices had fallen by 778 (10%) in the past 8 years leaving 2.5million patients having to find a new one (2). The number of senior GPs had plummeted by 4,685 (22%) over just 5 years (3).

Dr Nainesh Chotai (GP, Senior partner at The Glenfield Surgery and Chair of LLRLMC) said “consecutive governments have raised expectations without the required investment. We are asking our patients to recognise this, and help us to ensure that our limited resources are used for those patients with the greatest need”.

Despite this general practice had risen to the task of providing a safe service throughout the pandemic, and in March 2021 provided 4.9 million more appointments than in February 2021, and 2.3million more appointments per month than before the pandemic (March 2019) (4).

In addition, general practice has delivered the majority of the Covid Vaccination Programme.

Instead of praising general practices, some newspapers have castigated them, falsely accusing GPs of not pulling their weight, and practices of closing their doors.

Dr Fahreen Dhanji (GP Partner at Latham House Medical Centre, and LLRLMC Board Member) said “unfortunately many of our patients believe the false impression given by the tabloids, resulting in mistrust, abuse and unwarranted complaints”

As hospital departments restart their outpatient clinics these are often done remotely, and they frequently expect general practice to pick up their work (for example arranging blood tests and scans, prescribing medication, arranging follow up, issuing sick notes) in addition to their own workload. This further reduces general practices’ ability to help our patients.

Dr Grant Ingrams (Managing GP Partner at Oakmeadow Surgery and LLRLMC Board member) said “We need hospitals and other services to recognise that general practice is at breaking point. Every time someone expects general practice to carry out additional unfunded and uncontracted work, this reduces general practice’s ability to meet the health needs of our own patients.”

General practices are asking patients to (5):

**Be respectful and kind**

**Be self sufficient**

**Be prepared**

**Be thoughtful**

**Be Covid aware**

**Be patient**

**Be cancer aware**

Dr Grant Ingrams added “Be cancer aware is a crucial message. We are concerned that there has been a reduction in people presenting with symptoms of possible cancer or other serious conditions. We want patients to use services responsibly so we can see those with worrying symptoms without delay.

Dr Nainesh Chotai concluded “general practitioners and our staff have been affected like other members of our communities. Too many of our colleagues, family members, friends, and patients who we have known for many years, have died or otherwise suffered. Today, we are asking for our patients to work with us, and for other services to recognise our current limitations. Together we can ensure that we focus our resources on patients with the greatest health need and get through this pandemic and the recovery period minimising the long term damage to the health of our communities.”

Ends

**Further Information:**

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**Notes to Editors:**

1. The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Medical Committee is an elected representative body with a statutory function to represent NHS GPs in this area.
2. <https://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/almost-800-gp-practices-have-shut-over-the-past-eight-years/>
3. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/general-and-personal-medical-services/31-march-2021
4. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/appointments-in-general-practice/march-2021>
5. **Be respectful and kind**. Please respect that general practitioners and our staff are working harder than ever to provide healthcare. Being abusive and rude will not get you seen quicker or improve your outcome.

**Be self-sufficient**. If you or your child have a minor rash, signs of a cold, or other minor symptoms, do not think GP first. Try home remedies, look for advice from [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk), or ask for help from a pharmacist. Only seek an appointment if you have serious symptoms, or advised to by a pharmacist.

**Be prepared.** Keep simple remedies including paracetamol or ibuprofen at home. Order your repeat medications well in advance. Think about signing up to the NHS App or other App provided through your practice.

**Be thoughtful.** Practices are receiving a massive increase in complaints. Each complaint takes staff away from patient care to respond to. Before complaining, think whether it is appropriate. Is it due to an error or mistake which practices should know about to change or improve their services, or is it relating to the significant reduction in the current capacity to provide services by practices or hospitals and therefore no change is possible?

**Be Covid aware**. If you develop a new cough, high temperature or loss of taste or smell, it could be Covid. Do not contact your GP unless you have done a Covid test first. Do not attend at the surgery, as this could cause an outbreak, infect vulnerable patients or staff, and lead to the practice having to close all their services for a deep clean.

**Be patient.** All health services have been significantly affected by the pandemic with huge backlogs. Your GP cannot change this. Do not expect your GP to get an appointment or investigation brought forward unless there has been a significant change in your condition. You can only be moved up the list by making another patient wait longer.

**Be cancer aware**. We are concerned that the number of patients presenting with symptoms of possible cancer or other significant illnesses has reduced during the pandemic. If you or someone you know have worrying symptoms, then please do not delay but make an appointment as soon as possible. See https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/symptoms/