



Work with us to counter abuse of practice staff

We need your help to combat the growing anti-GP sentiment being experienced by GPs and practice staff.

As your representative body, we are increasingly worried about the volume of abuse which our GPs and practice teams are being subjected to on a daily basis, and the mental and physical effect of that abuse.

If you work in general practice or are involved with a group working with our practice teams in the Capital and would like to help us present an accurate picture of the pressures and work taking place in surgeries across London, please contact us at comms@lmc.org.uk. We need your experience, your face, and your voice to help us to tell the story of general practice and the demands and pressures we manage.

The task at hand now is just as difficult as when London's GPs, nurses and practice staff were applauded in the streets last year. Much of our work goes unseen and the majority of Londoners have been fantastic in their support for their local GPs, but abuse is growing among a minority.

We know that London practice staff are still receiving profanity filled text messages and emails, and that administrators and clinicians are regularly receiving abuse and threats. Recent reports of further physical assaults of GPs and their receptionists, resulting in broken bones and hospitalisation, indicate that there is an urgent need to communicate that general practice is working as hard as it can, and that those on the other side of the reception desk, the consulting room or at the end of the phone are people, not a faceless sounding board for frustrations.

Healthcare is not an issue of primary or secondary care, but managing care across the whole health system. And it is understandable that where hospitals are prioritising urgent care, some investigations and referrals may be delayed. But negative media messaging is adding to the inappropriate expectations of general practice from the public.

GPs and practice teams were already practising at the limits of patient safety even before the pandemic due to longstanding disparities between supply and demand, and workload and workforce. The resulting conflict and disconnection from the realities of the pandemic is undermining confidence and trust amongst some patients, and morale and resilience amongst some practitioners.

In response to demands from NHSE and with patient and staff safety in mind, we have changed the way we consult; planned and administered vaccines for flu and for Covid-19; continued to deal with patient's ongoing clinical needs including cancer presentations and chronic condition management; and we have shown resilience day in and day out.

Despite huge pressure, London general practice remains fully, and safely, open.

And the number of GP appointments in London has increased. In June 2019 London GP appointments stood at 3,139,253. During the height of the pandemic in June 2020 these figures reduced marginally to 2,914,673. And in June 2021 figures stood at 3,993,157, a 27% increase despite London having 60 fewer GP practices open. Whilst some may be accounted for by mergers, other practices will have simply closed.

We need unambiguous communication to the public by our national leaders to ensure that patients and communities have a clear understanding and expectation of what services can be offered; covering immediate essential needs to prevent the harms we saw in the first wave with delayed presentations for serious illness and long term condition exacerbations, and helping to ensure that people continue to access other essential services such as childhood vaccinations.

If you would like to use our anti-abuse video you can embed the video from YouTube on your practice website or download the file to add to screens.