



“We want our patients to have access to a responsive and safe GP service, and this can only be delivered by GPs taking industrial action.” says LLRLMC

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Immediate Release

Last night (Thursday 7 March 2024) General Practitioners met with senior GP leaders from the British Medical Association. GPs were told in no terms that if they want their patients to continue to have access to a safe and accessible general practice, they are being left with no option but to take industrial action.

GPs were told that the BMA asked the government for Stability, Safety and Hope for general practices during negotiations, but the government have said no.

The BMA advised that the profession is angry, and that GPs across England could not believe the contents of the contract which is being imposed for 2024/25.

The BMA has arranged an independent referendum overseen by Civica which is open from 7 March 2024 until 27 March 2024. There is only one question – asking GPs whether they support the imposed contract for 2024/25. This is the first step to general practices taking industrial action.

Local GPs were told by the BMA that the ideology of this government is running general practice into the ground. This is the third year in a row that the government has imposed a revised contract.

General Practice is the one sector in the NHS which has bucked the trend and has increased productivity year after year. Now GPs provide services to half of the whole population every month.

This is being delivered with a zero deficit whereas it is predicted that the hospital sector will have a £1.5billion overspend for this year.

Dr Grant Ingrams (Senior GP and Chair of LLR LMC) said that “General practice has been an exemplary service working harder for less funding than the rest of the NHS, but instead of being praised we are being punished. Long term the biggest losers will be our patients as they find it harder and harder to get an appointment in general practice, and even then unlikely to be with a GP let alone one they know and trust.”

As the government point out more GPs are being trained than ever before, but we are losing them at a faster rate, so the number continues to dwindle. We now have 2000 fewer GPs in England than in 2019. In Leicester City every GP now looks after 720 more patients each, compared with before the pandemic.

Dr Grant Ingrams said “General practice so far has managed to pull a huge rabbit out of the hat, delivering 14% more appointments despite a significant reduction in funding. It would take a 52% increase in funding to restore general practice to the level of funding in 2006.”

“General practices continue to provide 90% of healthcare but their share of NHS funding has been eroded from 11% to the lowest ever next year of 6%. The need for general practice services has increased by 22.5% in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland since the pandemic, which is why, despite the heroic efforts of GPs increasing appointments by 14% the experience for patients decreases.”

Dr Grant Ingrams added “despite the huge amount of evidence that general practices need support and investment, the government has imposed a contract with increased requirements and yet a further reduction in funding. I apologise to patients in advance that next year they are going to see a reduction in general practices services. Indeed, many patients may see their local GP service close. Across England 1,300 practices have already closed over the past 10 years.”

Dr Grant Ingrams noted that “The government’s response is often that general practices need to modernise, but at the same time they continue to force GPs to work under the 1890 Partnership Act which they refuse to change.”

The government tries to display GPs as overpaid and underworked, whereas the truth is the reverse. A GP now working 3 days a week exceeds the average hours of a full-time worker in other industries, and the average income of a full time GP has reduced by 41% in real terms.”

Dr Grant Ingrams summarised that “General practices continue to provide the majority of NHS healthcare and deliver the greatest amount of bang for the public buck. They are providing 14% more appointments for £620million less funding compared with 2019. The government could have agreed to many cost-neutral changes to free GPs from micromanagement and red tape so they could concentrate on providing quality care for their patients but they refused to do so. Instead they have cynically imposed a contract which due to decreased funding will lead to poorer services for patients and general practice a further step closer to imploding and no longer providing a universal service available to all patients.”

Ends

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Notes to Editors:

- 1) The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Medical Committee is an independent elected representative body with a statutory function to represent NHS GPs in this area. First established in 1911, they currently work under the NHS Act 2006.