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**Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP**

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

15 September 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: Working with, and supporting primary care**

I write following my letter dated 12 July, and our joint letter with RCGP, NHS Confederation and the Institute of General Practice Management (IGPM) dated 9 September, to address [your comments](#) in the House on the 13<sup>th</sup> September regarding face-to-face GP appointments.

In your comments, you suggested that the government was working with the BMA and would be doing more to increase face-to-face GP appointments. Our members want to be able to do this, however, the simple truth is that we need far more than just words to do so, and we need to remember “a return to how things were before the pandemic” would mean a return to a profession at breaking point, too few GPs, practice nurses, support staff, inadequate premises and longer waiting times to obtain an appointment for patients.

In my previous correspondence I emphasised the extreme and unprecedented pressure facing primary care, from record consultation numbers and an extended winter vaccine programme, through to supporting the huge primary and secondary care backlog. Our letter dated the 9<sup>th</sup> September, signed by BMA, RCGP, NHS Confederation and IGPM pleaded with government to support primary care to improve access and to end the rising tide of abuse against all those working in primary care.

It is with sadness and frustration that I listened to your comments which I believe will only serve to add more fuel to the fire which has resulted in GPs being scapegoated for a lack of resource and support being provided to general practice. I note from your comments you wish to engage with the BMA on this crucial issue. As we have requested over the last two months, I would like to urgently meet with you to discuss how government can meaningfully support and enable general practice to deliver not only more face-to-face appointments, but to also fund premises so that they are safe and accessible, increase workforce recruitment and retention, and how you will work with us to stem the tide of abuse, which if not addressed will lead to even more primary care workers reducing hours or being forced out of their roles.

Urgent action is needed - but not simply to mandate doctors to do more, in time they do not have, with staff that do not exist, in premises that are too small and unventilated to be safe. In addition, practices are still expected to achieve rigid QOF targets and yet don't have the blood bottles to do this, and yet no account has been made for this. It is urgent action from the government that is needed

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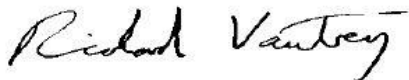


to both provide the necessary resource and to remove the unnecessary targets and bureaucracy that get in the way of delivering good care to our patients. The complete lack of primary care funding in the recent NHS funding announcement is completely counterproductive and fails to recognise the unprecedented pressures and backlog impacting practices on a day to day basis. It is urgent action that is needed from government to publicly support the general practice workforce to end the abuse, and it is critical action from government to attract more people to work in the NHS, while keeping those who are considering leaving primary care all together.

The challenge in front of the NHS and general practice, in particular, cannot be underestimated, patients deserve an honest accounting of the scale of the pressures and impact on services. They and doctors deserve nothing less than a clear plan from government, adequately resourced, detailing how the current demand on services and backlog of care will be tackled. Tough decisions will need to be made, but they must be done without scapegoating the very services and people who dedicate themselves to patient care, who were central to seeing the country through the pandemic and who worked tirelessly to deliver the most successful vaccine programme in our country's history.

I look forward to meeting with you in the coming days so that we can work together to discuss what the government must do to support primary care and meet the needs of its patients.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Richard Vautrey'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Dr Richard Vautrey**  
Chair, BMA General Practitioners Committee