

**Somerset LMC's response to Friday's DHSC & NHSEI "rescue package" sent to Somerset MPs**  
**October 2021**

*Dear X,*

*I emailed you a few weeks ago about the state of general practice in your constituency. Today we have seen the DHSC & NHSEI publication outlining plans to improve access for patients and support for GPs. Despite the BMA's welcome of the extra funds I hope that you will believe me when I say that extra money really is not the answer this time. Throwing more tax payers' money at the NHS has surely been tested to destruction by now? The response risks making HMG look out of touch with the scale of the real crisis on the ground.*

*We need to work together to better understand the problem. Please will you take up the offer I made last time I emailed and see for yourself what is going on in a practice in your constituency?*

*The NHS is facing the worst winter for decades and, as a result, patients' care will suffer. Appointments will be harder to book, waiting times will get longer, practices will struggle to cope and more of the profession will leave it. I admit freely that other policies, notably the incremental restrictions in lifetime pension allowance, mean that well paid professionals like GPs will find early retirement more attractive. Reception staff will simply look elsewhere for a job where they do not face daily abuse.*

*As I said last time, we are well aware of the frustrating shortcomings in services, not just in general practice but across the NHS. I am certain that your postbag is full of complaints from constituents. Therefore it is disappointing to see no end to the preoccupation with face-to-face appointments. We need a more intelligent conversation than the Daily Mail's agenda about the variety of appointments and care that are available to meet patients' needs. No one denies that in-person consultations are a key feature of general practice and absolutely necessary for some patients and certain conditions. But the pandemic has proven that in many other cases phone or video appointments are entirely appropriate and appreciated by patients. A crude focus on percentages, targets and "naming and shaming" is simply unhelpful. We need a genuine reduction in unnecessary bureaucracy and the regulatory burden so that colleagues can do their jobs flexibly in a way that is right for the next person in the (very long) queue. Reforming who can provide Fit Notes and DVLA checks at some time in the future is a drop in the ocean compared with what is needed to free up time for more appointments now.*

*It is good that Mr Javid is talking more positively about general practice but he needs to do much more to publicly support the profession when we are under such pressure and facing abuse from frightened patients and their families on a daily basis. Indeed this rescue package could make things worse. As Mr Liddle-Grainger might say, it's like throwing a drowning man a lead lifebelt.*

*I will look forward to hearing from you.*

*(Suitably edited for Mr Heappey & Mr Warburton who have arranged practice visits)*