**Backing the independent contractor model**

Recent weeks have seen the huge stresses on the health service appearing front and centre in the media and on political agendas, with politicians from across the spectrum having their say on how they would alleviate the current unsustainable pressures we and our patients are facing.

Disappointingly the Labour Party and its shadow health secretary Wes Streeting have come out with a number of pronouncements on how it would, if in power, overhaul general practice, firstly by phasing out the independent contractor model, replacing it wholesale with a salaried service.

As you know, GPC England is wholeheartedly in support of the independent contractor model, which, when supported properly, is value for money and invaluable for continuity of care. As GPC England acting chair Kieran Sharrock said in his response to [Mr Streeting’s comments](https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/opposition-should-be-targeting-government-not-gps-says-bma), we are not completely averse to change and are already looking ahead to what contract will replace the current five-year framework that ends in 2024, but this should not be about ‘reinventing the wheel’. We need a contract that supports general practice in all its variety, and for the government of the day to invest appropriately.

Meanwhile, we [raised concerns](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11638729/There-danger-people-turn-Dr-Google-Health-experts-slam-Labour-plan-NHS-reforms.html) at plans mooted by Labour leader Sir Kier Starmer to allow more direct-to-specialist referrals, outlining how it could in fact be counter-productive, creating higher demand on services, and worsening delays for secondary care.

Clearly, instead of blaming GPs for problems with the health service – the opposition should be setting its sights on the Government that has overseen a haemorrhaging of GPs over the last decade.

We are due to sit down and discuss all of this with Mr Streeting soon, to ensure that he understands the pressures on the frontline and how these can realistically be alleviated for the benefit of both staff and patients.

(Article taken from the GPC Update to LMCs 20th January 2023)