

Leeds Local Medical Committee Limited

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20th September 2021

Dear Mr Hilary Benn,

Re: Support for General Practice

I am writing to you as the representative body for GPs and general practices in Leeds and to seek your support for general practice.

It is well recognised that the NHS, including general practice, has played a crucial role in caring for and supporting patients throughout the pandemic. GP surgeries have been open throughout, delivering more appointments than before the onset of the pandemic, with the most recent figures showing that over 50% of these were face to face. At the same time in Leeds GPs and their teams have led and delivered the incredibly successful covid-19 vaccination programme, protecting hundreds of thousands of people from this serious infection as a result.

GP practices, extended and out of hours services in which GPs work, are working tirelessly to care for their patients to the best of their ability. They are doing this at a time when the impact of the backlog in care in both primary and secondary care is putting a huge strain on services, but nevertheless GPs and their teams are going the extra mile each day to try to respond to the needs of their patients.

It was heartening to see the results of the [National Patient Survey](#) carried out earlier this year, which found that 83% of patients rated their overall experience of their practice as good. However, as a result of the huge demand for our services we know that many patients often have to wait too long to get through to practices on the phone and some patients and others would prefer to attend a surgery as they did prior to the pandemic. GPs are as concerned about it as their patients, which is why we need your help to tackle it.

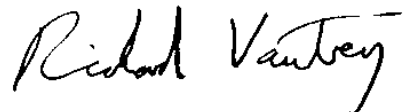
General practice began the pandemic with too few GPs, practice nurses and other staff, and the situation has only got worse not better. We have one of the lowest number of GPs per head of population in comparison with other similar countries and whilst GP numbers fall practice list sizes rise. At the same time we have not seen the necessary investment in to practice premises, leaving many surgeries with small, poorly ventilated waiting rooms. Returning to a pre-pandemic situation would be a return to patients sitting in over-crowded waiting rooms and potentially leaving with an infection they did not attend with. Practices have successfully used telephone and online systems to help protect patients from this risk, but will always see those patients face to face when it is necessary to do so, as the above figures confirm.

Despite the hard work and dedication of GPs and practice teams across Leeds it has been really demoralising to see, hear and receive the unprecedented levels of criticism and abuse directed at GPs in the media, on social media and directly to individuals and practices. We would really appreciate you publicly challenging this and supporting your constituent practices.

The BMA's GP committee have launched a campaign encouraging people to [Support Your Surgery](#) which explains to patients why practices are under such pressure and calls for an increase in the number of GPs and practice staff and improvements to practice premises to create safer waiting areas for patients. Please could you use your own communications to constituents to encourage people to sign this petition, and by doing so support your local practices.

Your public support for GP practices and services at this time would be really appreciated. I would be very pleased to meet with you to discuss this further.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Vautrey". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Vautrey" clearly distinguishable.

Dr Richard Vautrey

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Assistant Medical Secretary