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**Monday 21 March 2022**

**Don’t ‘leave a gap’ in our workforce, Partnership urges**

During the pandemic, reports of abuse directed at doctors’ surgery staff and community pharmacy teams across West Yorkshire have increased.

In response the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership (WY HCP) has launched a new insight driven campaign called ‘leaving a gap’ to make people think about the consequences of abusive behaviour. Co-produced with staff and patients, the campaign recognises that

services are extremely busy, and it can be frustrating for people accessing care.

The campaign reminds people we’re all here to help each other and the importance of all round understanding and kindness.

A series of striking images created as part of the campaign aim to make people think about the gap that will be left if staff leave their role due to abuse.

This comes following an unprecedented level of need for advice and appointments in primary care. There has been a 15% increase in demand since the same time two years ago with community pharmacies managing increasing numbers of people, many GP practices receiving more than 1000 telephone calls every day, alongside delivering lifesaving flu and COVID-19 vaccines.

Abuse directed at GP practices and community pharmacy teams means receptionist and counter staff deal with the most insults and threats. As a vital part of the health care team, they are skilled in helping care for people and treating all information confidentially. They ask questions to direct people to the best support and are trying to help.

Teams have been spat and sworn at, their cars damaged, received death threats and been in tears, regularly.

**Dr Richard Vautrey, Leeds GP said** “Services remain exceptionally busy, and whilst GP teams are working as hard as they can we know it can be very frustrating for patients. This campaign is all about asking people to take a moment to think before speaking with our staff. Abuse is significantly impacting staff morale at a time when the workforce has never been so stretched. It is in danger of driving away staff from a profession under pressure – staff leaving their jobs won’t help anyone and will only make the situation worse”.

**Dr James Thomas, Chair of WY HCP Clinical Forum said** “GPs are working differently, whilst helping more people than ever before. One conversation can be enough to hurt. It’s important that we all take time to consider our behaviours and how it can impact on others. Being kind can make a huge difference to someone’s day”.

**Ruth Buchan Chief Executive Officer at Community Pharmacy West Yorkshire said** “While most people treat our staff with the respect they deserve in the workplace, sadly, community pharmacy teams are facing increased abuse. We are here to help you with advice and medicines. Please don’t take your frustration out on our teams. I know things can be frustrating but let’s be kind to each other, it can make a huge difference to someone’s day and work life”.

You can find out more at: www.wypartnership.co.uk/leaving-a-gap

**ENDS**

***Source***

There is an unprecedented level of demand for appointments in primary care with a 15% increase in demand since the same time two years ago and many GP practices receive more than 1000 telephone calls every day. [*Survation* qualitative research](https://www.survation.com/new-polling-sorting-out-waiting-lists-is-publics-top-priority-for-the-nhs/) (Sept 2021).

Community pharmacies are increasingly becoming the first port of call for people needing healthcare advice. In January 2021, an [audit](https://psnc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/PSNC-Briefing-027.20-Summary-of-the-findings-from-PSNC%E2%80%99s-Pharmacy-Advice-Audit.pdf) was carried out to quantify the pressures pharmacies are under as a direct result of providing informal patient consultations, often on a walk-in basis. This found that nationally, pharmacies were undertaking some 58 million informal consultations per year, without additional resources.

In England, in an average week, over 600,000 community pharmacy consultations are carried out to respond to patients' symptoms. Were pharmacies not there, it would result in approximately 492,000 additional GP appointments each week, or 65 appointments in each GP practice each week in England.

***Notes to the editor***

[West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership](http://www.wyhpartnership.co.uk) (WY HCP) is a large [integrated care system](https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/what-is-integrated-care/) (ICS) that supports 2.4 million people, living in urban and rural areas. 770,000 are children and young people. 530,000 people live in areas ranked in the most deprived 10% of England. 20% of people are from minority ethnic communities. There are an estimated 400,000 unpaid carers, as many don’t access support. Together we employ over 100,000 staff and work alongside thousands of volunteers.

The Partnership is made up of the NHS, councils, community care providers, hospices, the voluntary social enterprise community sector, Healthwatch and communities.

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