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**Ian Dodge**

Executive Director, NHS England & NHS Improvement

29 October 2020

## Increased pressures in general practice

Dear Ian

I am writing to highlight the rapidly increasing pressures in general practice and the immediate need for NHS England support.

General practice [appointments data](#) released today shows the enormous efforts that everyone in general practice is making to ensure patients can access the services they need. The total number of appointments for September is now higher than any time during the pandemic, and significantly higher than the same time last year. This comes at a time where the patient population continues to increase while the number of GPs has significantly decreased.

Added to that, the results of our [recent survey](#), show that the total number of appointments only conveys part of the story, with GPs telling us that remote consultations take longer, leaving GPs more tired and with longer working days as a result. The results highlight how staff are working harder, are concerned that they are going to have difficulty meeting demand in the next few months, and are starting to burn out. The current general increased demand on primary care, added to the extraordinary efforts to manage the COVID response, are simply unsustainable.

As you know, I wrote to Sir Simon last month and as a result met with him, to highlight the dire state of the morale of the profession. Since our meeting, at which he expressed his support for general practice, practice workload has increased further, as today's figures clearly demonstrate, and yet the lack of tangible support from NHSEI or government is making matters worse. Alongside this, the significant, unfounded and unchallenged media criticism of general practice, which is deeply concerning, is not only adding to this problem, but is also leading to adverse reactions from the public toward their practices, with recent reports of practice staff being abused and harassed.

With the increasing number of patients and practices moving into the Very High tier 3 week by week, practices are calling out for urgent support, but are being met with silence. The little funding for COVID-19 related matters that has been provided, ended on 31 July, as if government and NHSEI believed the pandemic was at an end. Last month we released our paper [General Practice during the Second Wave](#), which outlines the ongoing measures that we believe are needed, but we too have been met with silence.

At a time where the profession is exhausted and fearful for the future (for both themselves and their patients), it is more important than ever for the leaders of the NHS to show their appreciation and to stand

**Chief executive officer:** Tom Grinyer

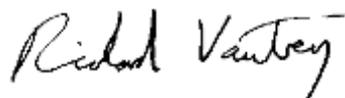
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behind general practice. A public message of support, as well as tangible measures to cope with both COVID-specific and general increased primary care demand, is not only vital for practices to maintain services to their, and your, patients, but would also go a long way to improving the morale of the profession and preventing a lasting deleterious impact.

I look forward to hearing from you with details of the support that NHS England & NHS Improvement will provide for general practice during these unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Vautrey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

**Dr Richard Vautrey**  
GP Committee England Chair