**“We support the sad but inevitable decision by Oakham Medical Practice to close their reception to patients” says LLRLMC**

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Responding to Oakham Medical Practice closing its reception to patients the Local Medical Committee for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLRLMC) responds that this is a very sad, but inevitable consequence of the increased amount of abuse experienced by general practices whilst dealing with the greatest health crisis in a generation.

Half of GPs report facing verbal abuse, one in five have been threatened themselves and 67% have witnessed violence or abuse against other staff[[1]](#endnote-1). Practice managers report that 75% of practice staff now received abusive comments from patients daily[[2]](#endnote-2).

General practices have continued to work relentlessly throughout the pandemic. The number of appointments now provided is 20% higher than before the pandemic. NHS Digital reported in March 2022 that general practices provided the highest number of appointments ever recorded (30.1million)[[3]](#endnote-3).

At the same time the number of General Practitioners continues to fall. Instead of 6000 additional GPs as promised by the Conservatives[[4]](#endnote-4), since 2015 the number has fallen by 1,595[[5]](#endnote-5).

In addition, NHS England are pushing forward with plans developed in 2016 to expand access to routine appointments during evenings and weekends, despite the already unsustainable workload and shrinking workforce.

Dr Nainesh Chotai (Chair, LLRLMC) said “GPs understand the frustration of patients who struggle to make appointments with them, but verbal or physical abuse is not an acceptable response.”

“Most practices are small business owned and run by the GP Partners who have a legal duty to protect their staff from abuse.”

“The current situation is due to increased workload whilst the number of GPs has decreased. Although GPs are providing the highest number of appointments ever recorded, the increased workload due to the pandemic means that we cannot provide the service that our patients want and we would like to provide.”

“NHS England ploughing ahead with plans to expand general practice opening hours when they have not delivered on the needed increase in workforce and are not recognising the highest workload ever recorded is foolhardy. This could be the final nail in the coffin for NHS GP services.”

Dr Grant Ingrams (Board Member, LLRLMC) said “Every GP I know has experienced an increase in abuse by patients and their carers during the pandemic. This has been fuelled by inaccurate and abusive press articles in some newspapers, and a lack of support by the government and politicians. Reporters take the easy route of scapegoating general practices rather than looking for the actual causes.”

“My own practice has lost two members of staff due to increased abuse.”

“General practices should be congratulated and not abused for providing an ongoing service throughout the pandemic despite a decrease in GPs and a significant increase in workload.”

LLRLMC are asking for:

* The press to stop scapegoating general practice.
* The government to help general practices to cope with the increased workload and backlog due to the pandemic.
* NHS England to shelve plans to expand hours of routine general practice services until the current workforce and workload crisis has been solved.
* NHS England to research the causes of poor recruitment and retention of GPs, and act to rectify them.
* The public to recognise the ongoing hard work that general practices provide despite the greatest healthcare crisis in a generation, and not to take out their frustrations by abusing GPs and their staff.

Ends

**Further Information:**

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**Notes to Editors:**

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Medical Committee is an elected representative body with statutory functions to represent NHS GPs in this area.

1. https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/bma-urges-public-to-be-kind-as-survey-reveals-worrying-levels-of-abuse-against-doctors-and-colleagues [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. https://managementinpractice.com/news/campaign-launched-as-75-of-practice-staff-report-receiving-daily-abuse-from-patients/ [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/appointments-in-general-practice/march-2022 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.bmj.com/content/367/bmj.l6463 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/nhs-delivery-and-workforce/pressures/pressures-in-general-practice-data-analysis [↑](#endnote-ref-5)