

25 July 2022

The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Letter sent via email to: mb-sofs@dhsc.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

Reference: Access to Health Services

Bury Council at its Full Council meeting on 20 July 2022 debated a notice of motion in relation to access to health services.

The Council recognised and noted:

1. That general practices across the country are at breaking point, putting the whole of the NHS at risk.
2. That Primary Care is the 'Bedrock of the NHS', dealing with around 90% of patient contacts, and acknowledges that, currently, GPs and their teams are at the forefront of helping communities recover from the pandemic; caring for people whose mental and physical health has been affected by Covid 19; and leading the Vaccination programme; whilst at the same time, they are dealing with the backlog of people on waiting lists elsewhere in the NHS.
3. That in 2016 the Conservative Government promised to increase GPs by 5,000 in 5 years but that the overall number of GPs has seen little growth since 2015.
4. That the number of patients per practice is 22% higher than it was in 2015 but the GP workforce has not grown with this demand; there are now just 0.46 fully qualified GPs per 1,000 patients in England – significantly below the average number of physicians in comparable nations.
5. That there is a growing backlog of care in the NHS; long waits for specialist treatment are skyrocketing and pressure on Accident and Emergency Departments is reaching pre-pandemic levels.
6. That general practice and general practitioners are under pressure; a recent survey by the British Medical Association (BMA) showed high levels of mental health conditions and exhaustion; resignations from General Practice are also rising, and practices are shutting down at record rates.
7. That it is becoming increasingly difficult to get GPs to practice in deprived areas; as a result, those communities who most need good primary care are least able to access it.
8. That the Government and the Chief Executive of the NHS take urgent measures to address this crisis, including:-
 - (i) Delivering on previously unmet promises to increase the number of GPs by at least 5,000.
 - (ii) Ensuring that incentives are in place to meet the primary care needs of communities with the greatest need.
 - (iii) Reducing red tape and bureaucracy by exploring with the profession which regulatory and administrative tasks need to be kept and which don't.
 - (iv) Rebalancing the health system by encouraging better outreach work from secondary care.
 - (v) Increasing investment in community-based health-promoting activities to address the underlying causes of poor health.

The Council resolved to:

1. Write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care urging him to bring forward a plan to fix the crisis in primary care, meet the target for new GPs and ensure everyone who needs an NHS dentist can access one.
2. Do everything we can locally through the new Integrated Care Partnership to ensure that residents (through patient voice and patient experience) in our borough can access primary care services as needed and without delay.

Accordingly, I am writing to you in relation to this matter. I look forward to your response so that an update can be provided to Members of Bury Council.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G P Little." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Geoff Little OBE
Chief Executive