

20 June 2024

Open Letter to Prospective Party Candidates in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

Dear candidates

We the undersigned, representing general practices across the whole of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland are asking all Prospective Parliamentary Candidates to pledge their support for the resuscitation of NHS general practice. Patients are not getting the general practice service that they need and deserve despite GPs and their teams working harder than ever, often at unsafe levels, and this must change.

The NHS used to be the envy of the world, but no longer. Between 2017 and 2021 the international ranking of the NHS dropped from first to fourth.

General practice, providing services from cradle to grave, free at the point of delivery, remains the bedrock of the NHS providing the large majority of healthcare, but every day practices have to turn away patients who need their services, causing stress and dissatisfaction for patients and practice staff.

In 2019 the Conservative Government promised 6,000 additional GPs, but instead there are now 2,000 fewer fully trained GPs. Locally this means that each GP in Leicester City looks after 720 additional patients, in Leicestershire West 324, and in Leicestershire East and Rutland 432. If GPs only registered a safe number of patients, this would leave a third of a million people in LLR without a GP.

GPs' workload has significantly increased. LLR practices now see over 600,000 patients per month (29,000 per day), an increase of 12.6% since 2019. GP productivity has increased significantly, indeed in May 2022 this was the largest single contributor to the GDP.

The population continues to rise, and people are living longer with more medical conditions. Local data shows that patient need due to health problems has increased by over 20% since 2019. The significant increase in waiting lists for hospital outpatients, diagnostics and procedures means that GPs are also having to cope with much more complex patients who have conditions inappropriate to be dealt with in general practice.

International evidence is that a greater emphasis on primary care lowers the costs of care, improves health through access to more appropriate services, and reduces the inequities in the population's health.

Government policies have made GP services worse. For the last 3 years GPs have had new contracts forced on them, each time reducing funding and increasing workload. General practices are now receiving the smallest amount of NHS funding recorded. In addition, over the past 5 years the government have insisted that an ever-increasing amount of our budgets is used to fund other health professionals leaving the amount of funding available to employ GPs ever decreasing. General practice has used other staff for decades, but previously this was to support the work of the practice, but national policy is now to use them to replace GPs. This year the government has changed the law so that unqualified doctors can now work in general practice. These policies mean that practices can no longer provide continuity for patients, seeing the same GP, which is shown to improve healthcare,

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Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Medical Committee

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patient satisfaction and reduce cost.

Due to minimal investment, many GP premises are not fit for purpose with staff having to work from home, from broom cupboards or from other non-purpose-built buildings.

We are asking for all candidates from all parties to pledge to ensure that NHS general practice is restored. Micromanagement of practices, bureaucracy and how they spend their budget must be stopped allowing practices in conjunction with their patients to use funding flexibly to maximise services. Practices must be supported to modernise and use IT to enhance patient experience at a pace agreed with their patients. The NHS must increase investment in funding general practice services and premises developments to make them fit for purpose.

Yours faithfully

Dr Grant Ingrams (GP Partner and Executive Chair LLR LMC)
267 additional GPs and general practice supporters

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