

RCGP Brief: NHS General Debate 23rd February

General Practice and the NHS

General Practice is the cornerstone of the NHS, helping around 50 million people in England every year, carrying out 339.5 million appointments in 2022. We know how vital a robust General Practice service is to the functioning of the National Health Service and for keeping patients safe but targets to deliver more GPs continue to be drastically missed and this winter has been one of the most challenging on record.

The RCGP are calling on politicians and decision makers with responsibility for the NHS in England to urgently commit to a bold new plan to provide GPs and patients with the support that they need.

The present crisis in General Practice

General practice is at breaking point and workforce and workload challenges are forcing many out of the profession early creating an ever-worsening crisis, **42% say that they are planning to quit the profession in the next five years.** Years of under-investment in general practice means there is a chronic shortage of GPs and other members of the practice team, **the number of patients per GP is 2267 as of December 2022, this is an increase of 16% since 2015.**

This workload increase is unsafe for GPs and their patients, **68% of GPs say they do not have enough time in appointments to adequately assess and treat patients.**

We simply do not have enough GPs to safely meet the needs of the population.

Alongside workload and workforce challenges, GPs are battling an infrastructure that is not fit for purpose. Of those surveyed as part of the 2022 RCGP tracking survey:

- **64% said their computer systems were not able to properly share information with hospitals.**
- **74% said that their practice does not have sufficient physical space necessary to accommodate new staff.**
- **68% said that making back-office functions more efficient would make a significant difference to GP workloads.**

GPs want to be able to offer patients the appointment they need, when they need it, and practices are working harder than ever to care for patients and do their bit for the NHS. But this service is not invincible, and neither are GPs - both need urgent support.

The future of general practice

As outlined in our campaign - [Fit for the future: a new plan for GPs and their patients](#) - we are calling for:

- **A new recruitment and retention strategy** that allows us to go beyond the target of 6000 more GPs, backed by a £150 million annual GP retention fund, increasing the number of GP training places by at least 10% year on year, and changes to the current visa rules to make it easier for international GP trainees to stay and work in the UK
- **An NHS wide campaign to free up GPs to spend more time with patients** by cutting unnecessary workload and bureaucracy, including through a review of contractual requirements and improving coordination between primary and secondary care

- **Improving patients' experience of accessing care** by investing in a new suite of IT products and support for practices, making it easier for patients to choose to see the same GP or the next available member of the team
- **Allocate a bigger share of the NHS budget to general practice** to return funding to 11% of total health spend - with £1 billion additional investment in GP premises, more funding for practices serving deprived communities, and extra money for primary care networks to provide preventative care and promote population health.