

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

05 August 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Joint letter regarding primary care and premises

We write as the national organisations representing and supporting primary healthcare staff, and those representing patients who regularly use GP services, who are working hard every day to deliver primary care to patients across the country. Following your announcement this weekend on capital funding, your initial comments in Downing Street on taking up office, and your statement to the House of Commons on 25 July, we noted with interest your commitment to ensuring that the NHS receives the funds that were promised by the last Government in June 2018, including urgent funding for 20 hospital upgrades. We agree that premises should be a priority for your Government and ask that, alongside your commitment to hospital modernisation, there must also be an urgent commitment to support investment in general practice and community care premises such as community nursing and mental health services for children and adults, which are fundamental to the success of the NHS Long Term Plan.

GP premises have been underfunded over a number of years leading to a decline in provision available and a situation where safe, timely patient care is being put at risk. This situation is compounded by an overall lack of infrastructure investment, policies of converting health capital budgets into revenue, and delays by NHS England in providing updated Premises Cost Directions (PCDs) which provide the policy framework setting out how premises costs incurred by GP practices are reimbursed and how other funding, such as for premises improvements are delivered.

A survey by the British Medical Association (BMA), showed that only half of practices considered their premises to be fit for present needs, falling to just over 2 in 10 practices when asked if they thought their premises were fit for the future. The recent NHS England GP premises review also concluded that significant additional funding is required for primary care premises and the Patients Association GP Premises Survey 2018 report found serious issues with poor access for disabled patients.

Furthermore, we welcome the commitments made in the contract agreement between NHS England and the BMA's GP committee, which should lead to an expansion of over 20000 additional staff working alongside GPs in their practices. However this and other community based service developments can only take place if practice premises have sufficient capacity to accommodate them. Primary care estates must therefore be prioritised in the upcoming spending review. Such

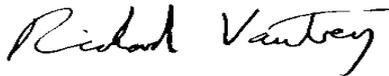
an approach will be crucial in improving patient care and contributing towards reducing GP waiting times.

Finally, we would emphasise that in terms of healthcare spending, the UK remains behind the OECD average, with NHS England requiring capital funding of £9.5bn in 2019/20 to bring us in line with other countries. This would be a £3.5bn increase on top of the current capital budget in 2018/19, rising to £4.1bn by 2023/24. Alongside this, an end to regular transfers from capital to revenue budgets is needed so that NHS trusts can invest and plan for the future. Worryingly, 78% of income from capital sales diverted to revenue spend last year alone.

There is clearly much to be done to stabilise the delivery of primary care (general practice and wider community based services) across the country, however we are hopeful that with the necessary investment and joined up forward planning the NHS and primary care together with hospital and other specialist services will thrive as a world leader in healthcare.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these vitally important issues with you and your officials and to work with you to deliver on your commitment to improve access to general practice for all our patients.

Yours sincerely



Dr Richard Vautrey,

Chair, BMA General Practitioners committee



Dr Peter Swinyard,

National Chairman, Family Doctor Association



Dr Minessh Patel,

Chair, National Association of Primary Care



Rachel Power,

Chief Executive, the patients association



Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard,

Chair of Council, Royal College of General Practitioners