

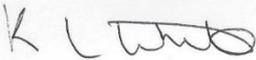
## Letter to Patients: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Following the recent article from the British Medical Association, we thought it was important to reiterate the pressures currently felt on general practice. We have been running our services throughout the pandemic, with our teams working above and beyond to deliver care in line with official guidance to ensure the safety of each other, our patients and our communities. On average, across our nine sites that use askmyGP, we have dealt with more than 3,600 patient requests each week - we've also had to maintain other clinical administration, such as lab results and prescriptions, and more recently undertaken the Covid-19 vaccination hubs alongside this. This work will not ease however as the other contractual elements of the GP contract that were postponed last year to accommodate the vaccinations have already recommenced. This is more than our clinical staff have ever had to deal with – whilst taking extra infection prevention control measures and adapting to constantly changing guidance.

Importantly, all of our practices have continued to offer and use face to face appointments where these have been clinically appropriate. Surprisingly, this has been difficult for some to accept and over the last year, we have been compared to supermarkets, stores and pubs with questions about why we cannot open freely either. Please remember that if our trained medical professionals were to have contracted Covid-19, our local populations could have been without a surgery, as with the already limited resource of clinicians available to support practices, cover was finite. It must also be remembered that like many of those across the UK some of our staff are vulnerable themselves and have had to shield, creating additional gaps in resource. To support this, our decision to only allow patients with appointments to attend the surgery was risk assessed throughout the year and we firmly stand by our processes – which kept both our staff and patients safe, enabling us to continue to provide care, albeit in a different way. We strongly believe that the processes and procedures put in place across our sites were a key contributing factor in preventing the unnecessary spread of this serious disease – which was pivotal for us when supporting 82,000 patients.

We await updated national standard operating procedures to guide us on how services may be delivered going forward and how to ensure the safety of patients and staff when reopening reception. We understand that the roadmap continues to allow more and more freedom to the public but we are still in a pandemic, and the news about rising case numbers of the Covid-19 variant first identified in India, highlights that a sensible and cautious approach to returning to normal in general practice is key.

We know that the last year has been testing for all but we continue to ask for your patience and understanding towards all of our staff as we continue to review and adapt our processes to protect and serve our patient population, as well as protect the wellbeing of our teams



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