

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

18th November 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Supporting general practice during a period of unprecedented pressure

As you know, we recently wrote to the Care Quality Commission (CQC) urging it to fully recognise the pressure general practice is under. Due to the new additional requirement to prioritise the COVID Vaccination Programme we need CQC to immediately halt all non-essential inspections and practice monitoring to allow practices to focus on the vital job at hand. For GPs and their practice teams to effectively play their part in delivering this major vaccination programme we need “all hands to the pump” and it is crucial all non-essential bureaucracy is reduced to a minimum.

We made clear in our correspondence that general practice has been open for our patients throughout the pandemic. As a result, our workforce is physically and psychologically drained by its heavy workload, having no time to recover from its experiences during the first wave of the pandemic, as patient demand and expectations continue to rise. We rightly advised that as COVID-19 cases surge and the NHS is at its highest level of emergency preparedness, GPs and their teams must be supported to serve the needs of their patients – and not be distracted from their primary focus of ensuring ongoing care.

It is extremely disappointing that CQC have not yet responded positively to our calls. As the recent response from Dr Benneyworth (chief inspector of primary care) sets out, it is continuing to undertake practice monitoring and will be telephoning / online calling practices to both gather and clarify information it holds. All while general practice continues to be the best performing sector it regulates, with 94% of practices rated good or outstanding when the pandemic started in March. Furthermore, as practices across England now prepare for the vitally important task of protecting our patients from COVID-19 they cannot have any additional distractions.

As your colleague Jo Churchill MP helpfully noted in her recent supportive letter to GPs and their teams, and as you acknowledged in your No 10 press briefing on Monday this week, general practice has adapted at an unprecedented pace in response to COVID-19, transforming the way



primary care services operate. We have shown that we can be trusted to deliver for our patients when they need us most.

With this in mind, given the massive challenges practices are now facing we ask you to do all you can to remove all unnecessary regulatory attention and bureaucracy from general practice and take the necessary steps to suspend all but essential CQC inspections other than those required for significant safety issues. By doing so you will reassure hard working practices, enable them to prioritise the care of their patients and support practices to engage with the COVID vaccination programme.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R M Vautrey', written in a cursive style.

Dr Richard Vautrey

Chair, BMA general practitioners committee, England