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Continued failure of primary care support services

Dear Karen

Thank you for your letter dated 16 May in response to our concerns regarding primary care support services in England, commissioned by NHS England and provided through Capita. Following the GP committee's vote of no confidence in Capita, I would like to highlight our continued concerns relating to the services provided. While we understand that steps are being taken to improve these services, it is important that we highlight the substantial issues that are ongoing and causing significant problems for the GP population.

A major issue affecting practices is that payments provided by Capita are often incorrect. Payments are missing large amounts of money that is owed for a variety of reasons including registrar reimbursements, seniority payments, pension deductions and locum reimbursements. Locum GPs making pensions payments to Capita receive no receipts and often payments are missing when records are requested.

Information updating and information sharing continues to be inadequate: performers' lists for both registrars and newly qualified GPs are not being updated in a timely manner. Information that was previously transferred, such as how to process new starters and how much to pay each trainee, is no longer being received by practices. Alongside this, there remain significant issues with the PCSE customer support centre. Support staff are not appropriately trained and do not answer queries on the phone, and cannot transfer calls to the right department due to backlogs. Support staff often suggest practices email the generic email address, but emails which require important information or urgent solutions often go unanswered. Even when answers are provided there is often an unacceptably long delay in doing so.

GP practices are still experiencing long delays in the collection and delivery of patient records. There are many issues with this service including that urgent requests are not being processed in a timely manner, there are large build ups of records at the practices with often no safe place to store them, and the wrong records are being delivered to practices. This new process has increased the burden on the practices, as when the patients' previous address is on their record



it falls on the practice to update it and individual packing means extra time and extra waste (practices must dispose of the bags themselves). In the pilot area, there are delays in providing the labels for records which leads to many records waiting to be bagged.

The delivery of supplies to practices is also inadequate as stock levels are often insufficient (for a number of items including prescription pads and syringes), supplies are not being delivered on time, Med3 forms are no longer provided in paper copy (we understand this is a new DWP initiative and yet practices, nor the BMA, have not been consulted about this).

New patient registrations are not being processed in a timely manner, meaning many patients cannot receive prescriptions and cannot be referred. Both patients and practices are becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of information provided.

While this is a significant transition of services, these issues have now been ongoing for a number of months and need to be urgently addressed as they are causing an adverse impact on practices that are already under significant pressure, and we are starting to receive reports of impact on patient care. I understand that you have taken steps to monitor and improve this situation with Capita but this is not visible to practices. There are therefore a number of questions that require answers as a matter of urgency to ensure GPs can be confident that the service will improve and that NHS England are taking this issue seriously :

- What assurances can be given that incorrect payments to practices will be resolved swiftly, and will not become a common occurrence?
- Performers list updating has regulatory and legal implications (if GPs are practicing without being on the list). Has the backlog been processed and what assurances can be given that backlogs will not build up again?
- When will the above issues be resolved and systems be running normally?
- What has Capita/PCSE done to resolve the situation?
- What has NHS England done to resolve the situation? What sanctions has NHS England placed on Capita due to their failings in providing an appropriate and efficient service to primary care providers? Has Capita been measured against their KPIs and if so what was the outcome?
- What compensation will NHS England provide to practices for the extra work they now incur as a result of these failings?

The GP committee and the wider GP population are very concerned about these issues and eager to hear your response. If a practice had consistently failed like this we are certain NHS England would have taken steps by now to suspend or terminate their contract, and yet practices do not see evidence of NHS England being as robust with the contract management of Capita. I would appreciate if you could respond to this letter, outlining your response to each point above which we can then circulate to our membership.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Chaand Nagpaul
GPC chair