

11 January 2017

## **BMA response to the National Audit Office's report on improving patient access to general practice**

Responding to the NAO report on improving patient access to general practice, Dr Chaand Nagpaul, BMA GP committee chair, said:

"This report is further evidence that the government's plans for extending patient access are in complete disarray.

"Policymakers have underestimated the number of GPs required to deliver their promises by almost 2,000. This comes at a time when the NHS is already suffering from a chronic shortage of GPs with one in three practices having unfilled doctor vacancies

<https://www.bma.org.uk/news/2016/december/one-third-of-gp-vacancies-remain-unfilled> .

There are further serious shortfalls in the number of doctors choosing to train as GPs and senior GPs are choosing to retire early or leave the NHS due to increasing pressures.

"Given that funding in general practice has failed to meet patient demand, NHS England and commissioners need to fully consider the consequences of their plans to extend access. To proceed without any sort of evaluation into the cost-effectiveness or the consequences of its objectives is irresponsible and could lead to much needed investment being spent on measures which don't adequately meet patient needs.

"The government must deliver on much needed extra investment in general practice. This together with tackling the recruitment and retention crisis are absolutely crucial to ensure patients can receive the timely, safe care they need." ENDS

Notes to editor:

The British Medical Association (BMA) is the voice of doctors and medical students in the UK. It is an apolitical professional organisation and independent trade union, representing doctors and medical students from all branches of medicine across the UK and supporting them to deliver the highest standards of care.

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