GP Recruitment Crisis. . .

19 May 2014, Press Release

“GP services in Wessex are facing a workforce crisis that could undermine patient care across the region.

These are the stark warnings from a new survey undertaken locally.

Fewer GPs will result in less appointments available with longer waits to see a GP and some practices may face closure.

The Wessex Local Medical Committee recently undertook a survey of the GPs who work locally.

A total of 1,400 GPs completed the survey, a response rate of over 50% (click here to view full survey results).

- About 14% of GPs plan to retire in the next 2 years and a further 4% indicated that they are so disillusioned that they intend to leave the profession and seek an alternative career (in total about 540 GPs).
- There will be 300 new GPs trained in the Wessex area in the next 2 years.
- Even if all the new GPs trained locally, went into general practice when they finished their training, there would be insufficient numbers to replace those who are leaving.
- Less that 50% of GPs being trained currently intend to join a practice when they finish training – many have indicated they intend to go abroad.
- Without adequate replacements there will be areas of Wessex where there may be no GPs left to provide a service to patients.
- Over 20% of GPs intend to retire earlier than they had planned.
- In those who intend to retire early, 60% stated that workload was the key issue.
- Nearly 30% of GPs have indicated that they intend to reduce the number of sessions they work in order to cope with the workload.
- In the last year, 67% of practices have had a GP vacancy and 28% of those practices failed to recruit.
- Nearly 40% of practices are currently short of GP sessions in their practice.

Dr Nigel Watson, GP in the New Forest and Chief Executive of Wessex Local Medical Committees said “this survey is very worrying, with GPs already leaving because of workload pressure, if no one replaces them the workload increases on those who remain, this will precipitate more early retirements and some areas could find themselves without a practice. Urgent action is needed to address the problems.”

Over the last couple of years General Practice has become far more challenging, with rising workload, a population with more complex health needs and greater demands for access.

Locally practices are finding it more difficult to recruit new GPs and as a result some have failed to replace retiring GPs. General Practice has become less attractive to younger GPs who are
choosing to work as a locum or go abroad rather than commit themselves to a practice. The reason many give for this decision is the workload they have witnessed within the Practice they trained in and a feeling that life within a practice is too difficult at the moment.

Many older GPs are looking to retire at an earlier age than they planned largely due to workload.

The result of this could be catastrophic if action is not taken to support and develop general practice locally.

**Below are some quotes from the survey:**

“I currently have no plans to retire given my age but seriously am considering all other options to try and get out of this stressful undervalued profession that is killing my social and family life and destroying my morale daily.”

“I’m only 38 and can’t do this for the next 22 years!”

“If it was financially viable for me and my family, I would not hesitate to leave the profession, and I regret my choice of career most days, often putting in 15 hour days, day after day.

“I had hoped to continue past 60 but sadly am now counting the time down as am finding the workload overwhelming and may well retire from general practice at 56-58 if financially possible.

“I have brought forward my planned retirement age from 65 to 60 because of the risk that the increasing workload is posing to my health.

“Retirement not an option as too young, but am seriously looking at other ways out, current situation unsustainable!

“Falling income, pension issues, exponentially rising workload with bureaucratic micromanagement and political sound bites which unrealistically raise expectations to the point of stupidity are crucifying this profession. I will look for an early way out any way I can.

“Still enjoying work but increasing workload definitely taking its toll. Would consider earlier retirement if did not still have children in full-time education. Am tired of being a whipping boy for the press and politicians.

Our patients locally deserve to receive high quality care. This can only be achieved if we recruit and retain GPs. Urgent action is required to address these issues or we face a year on year reduction in the number of GPs. In addition if general practice fails the pressure on hospitals will rise exponentially.

**PR Ends**

Some facts about General Practice that might be helpful:

1. General Practice in this country is widely admired throughout the world and is seen to deliver high quality services, available to all, irrespective of their ability to pay, cost effective and trusted by patients.
2. There are 40,000 GPs in the UK and the average GP looks after about 1,700 patients.
3. In 2004 there were 240,000,000 consultations with GPs and this rose to 340,000,000 in 2013, which means about 1,000,000 patients, consult with a GP each day.
4. On average a GP will see about 40 - 45 patients per day.
5. General Practice received about 8% of the NHS budget yet accounts for 90% of all the NHS.
Practices are funded between £60 – 80 per patient per year – so less than £2 per person per week.

The finding support evidence nationally from surveys undertaken by the British Medical Association and the current campaign to support general practice:  [http://bma.org.uk/working-for-change/your-gp-cares](http://bma.org.uk/working-for-change/your-gp-cares)
What we do
We represent GPs and practices across the counties of Dorset, Hampshire & the Isle of Wight, Wiltshire, BaNES and Swindon whilst also providing services to the Islands of Jersey and Guernsey.
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