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Dear colleagues

Improving General Practice – a call to action

NHS England is seeking your views to help shape the future of primary care services in England.

Through our recent engagement with general practice, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and other partners, we have heard that general practice and wider primary care services face increasingly unsustainable pressures and that general practice wants and needs to transform the way it provides services to reflect these growing challenges.

These include:

- an ageing population, growing co-morbidities and increasing patient expectations, resulting in large increase in consultations, especially for older patients, e.g. 95% growth in consultation rate for people aged 85-89 in ten years up to 2008/09. The number of people with multiple long term conditions set to grow from 1.9 to 2.9 million from 2008 to 2018;
- increasing pressure on NHS financial resources, which will intensify further from 2015/16;
- growing dissatisfaction with access to services. The most recent GP Patient Survey shows further reductions in satisfaction with access, both for in-hours and out-of-hours services. 76% of patients rate overall experience of making an appointment as good;
- persistent inequalities in access and quality of primary care, including twofold variation in GPs and nurses per head of population between more and less deprived areas;
- growing reports of workforce pressures including recruitment and retention problems.

We have produced an evidence pack and set of slides which is on the [NHS England website](#). The slides set out the case for change to the way that general practice services are provided and commissioned and asks questions about the future of general practice.

Our aim is to enable general practice to play an even stronger role at the heart of more integrated out-of-hospital services that deliver better health outcomes, more personalised care, excellent patient experience and the most efficient possible use of NHS resources. This forms part of the wider 'call to action' that NHS England launched on 11 July 2013.

The main purpose of this 'call to action' is to stimulate debate in local communities – amongst general practice, area teams, CCGs, health and wellbeing boards and other community partners – as to how best to develop general practice services. A number of area teams and CCGs are already working collaboratively to develop shared strategies for primary care and integrated care, and the questions in this 'call to action' are designed both to support these existing examples of local action and to stimulate similar approaches in all other parts of the country.

We also ask a number of questions about how NHS England can best support these local changes, for instance through the way that we develop national contractual frameworks.

We are developing similar frameworks to stimulate debate about our strategic approach to the commissioning of primary dental services, pharmacy services and eye care services.

NHS England through its area teams will:

- a) work with local communities to develop local strategies, based on the emerging principles set out in this 'call to action' and based on close engagement with patients and the public to ensure that general practice develops in ways that reflect their needs and priorities and build on their insights;
- b) discuss with local practices, CCGs and other community partners what changes we need to make nationally to support these local strategies.

In parallel, we will continue to engage national professional bodies and other national partners to help develop common purpose in helping support these local changes.

We propose to publish a further document in the autumn setting out in more detail the proposed key features of our strategic framework for commissioning of general practice services and to capture the key elements of the work that area teams, CCGs and other partners are carrying out locally.

Yours faithfully



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Deputy Medical Director



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