

Matthew Gould, Chief Executive Officer, NHSX

2 April 2020

GP Digital estate and infrastructure

Dear Matthew,

I am writing to you following significant concerns being voiced by General Practice whose digital estate and infrastructure remains in an unfit state going into this pandemic and is inhibiting our ability to respond as effectively as we believe we could. This applies to the breadth of general practice (including OOH, hubs, urgent care centres, locum and retired returner workforce).

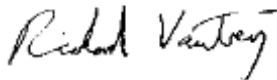
Reports from around the country suggest that practices are struggling to gain access to basic pieces of IT equipment due to funding constraints. In some cases they are being asked to fund this infrastructure themselves; a number have taken matters into their own hands, investing in unlimited data packages, using their personal devices to provide video consultations, in order to try to maintain services to their patients and support their colleagues.

To ensure and maximally increase capacity, we must enable remote assessment of patients through centrally funded tools, whilst supporting remote working by sourcing fit for purpose and appropriate equipment. In order to do this, we need urgent access to appropriate infrastructure such as laptops, VPN tokens and virtual login capability, as quickly as is practically possible. We also need to avoid solutions that mean a GP or practice staff member working at home can only access the patient record if the computer they would normally use in the surgery is not being used by anyone else.

The BMA has continually highlighted the parlous state of NHS IT infrastructure and have welcomed your support in addressing this, however we feel the current pandemic leaves general practice in an unfit state digitally where our clinical capability is unable to be fully utilised.

We would welcome your urgent action and help to resolve these issues. To do so would not only help us maximise our response to the pandemic but would also lay the foundation for new and better ways of working in the future.

Yours sincerely



Dr Richard Vautrey
Chair, BMA's GPC England

Chief executive officer: Tom Grinyer

