

Date: 31 March 2017

**Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview  
and Scrutiny Committee  
County Hall  
New Road  
Oxford  
OX1 1ND**

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP  
Secretary of State  
Department of Health  
Richmond House  
79 Whitehall  
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Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: Under-funding of General Practice in Oxfordshire**

I write to you in my capacity as the Chairman of the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) to urge you to review the level of funding provided to Clinical Commissioning Groups for primary care and general practice in particular.

The Committee's remit is to review and scrutinise the planning, provision and operation of health services for Oxfordshire. HOSC members have expressed grave concerns about the sustainability of general practice across the county and are concerned that this is caused by the under-funding of primary care both nationally and locally.

Since 2015 HOSC has been scrutinising Oxfordshire's local plans to transform health and care by moving 'care closer to home' and supporting greater levels of prevention and self-care. The proposals in Phase 1 that are currently being consulted on by the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG), involve changes in the acute sector that will impact an already stretched GP workforce. This is of great concern to the Committee.

Alongside its scrutiny of OCCG's transformation plans, HOSC has had a number of discussions about the pressures on primary care and is aware of the difficulty recruiting and retaining GPs, and the need to update premises and infrastructure to deliver a sustainable service.

The Committee understands that whilst these problems are experienced nationally, they are borne out locally in the closure of several GP practices. Cumulatively this risks a detrimental impact on access to essential care and places new pressures on neighbouring practices. Recent examples of this include the closure of Deer Park Medical Centre in Witney where the OCCG has not been able to re-procure a suitable alternative service within available funding, and the closure of North Bicester Surgery due to recruitment issues.

In addition, the OCCG is hampered by the lack of funding from NHS England to invest in the expansion and development of GP premises. This has been evidenced by the recent award of only c. £2m capital funding from the Estates and Technology Transformation

Fund, despite OCCG's application for c. £50m for targeted and prioritised local projects. Because of this, a planned expansion of the Wantage Health Centre has been denied just as 5,000 new homes are being built nearby, bringing an extra 12,000 residents to the local area in need of GP services.

Whilst the OCCG has a proposed framework for managing these pressures, including a new model of primary care at scale (i.e. surgeries operating with patient lists of 30-50,000), this will rely on investment in physical infrastructure, improvements in technology and increased capacity within the primary care workforce. Without a significant increase in the funding for general practice across Oxfordshire, the Committee questions the viability of this plan and has grave concerns about the impact of transformation proposals on local people and services.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne Constance', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Yvonne Constance OBE  
Chairman Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

cc.

David Mowat MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Community Health and Care

David Smith, Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group

Dr Joe McManners, Clinical Chair, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group