

IGPM Response to the General Practice Patient Survey

The latest GP Patient Survey is published today and sadly shows an overall decline in patient satisfaction with their GP Practice.

Practices across the country are committed to listening to patients and take their feedback seriously. Part of this feedback is the GP Patient Survey. This is an important tool as it allows practices to compare the experiences of their patients compared to other practices across England.

However, the IGPM has concerns on how this information is viewed externally, and that a number of factors often appear to be dismissed when publicizing the results.

The survey is sent out to patients in January, which is when demand for NHS services is at its peak. Referred to as a time of “winter pressures, practices find it harder to maintain a high standard of service and patients may find it more difficult to obtain an appointment or get through to their practice. Increased illness in the community means more demand for appointments, but also mean increased sickness absence for front-line staff.

The number of surveys sent also calls into question whether the results are statistically representative of the practice’s performance. Many of our members reported a response rate of less than 1% of their practice population. The number of patients surveyed is also very small – in some cases less than 2% of patients being sent the survey.

A significant concern from our members is how these statistics will now be conveyed in the public domain. Too often we have seen national and local media outlets use the figures to put practices into “league tables”, or attempt to “name and shame” practices, which does not take into consideration the individual difficulties or struggles each practice faces or the context outlined above. In some instances, this has then led to abuse, aggression, and degradation from patients towards surgery staff, resulting in higher turnover and reduced staff morale.

The survey results highlight the significant increase in demand for General Practice services over the last two years. This surge in demand has presented numerous challenges, including increased workload, recruitment difficulties, and the need to manage more complex health conditions. NHS England official figures show that in January 2024, 32.5 million appointments were delivered by GP practices in England. This compares to 26.9 million appointments for the same period in 2022, an increase of over 28%. Since 2019, there has been a real terms funding cut to General Practice of almost 7%. For an average size practice this is a cut equivalent to approximately £108,000 per year.

Whilst acknowledging the reduction in patients reporting satisfaction with their practice, the IGPM is also encouraged by the positive feedback received by many practices. This reflects the dedication and hard work of General Practice teams.

In response to these challenges, the IGPM is committed to supporting General Practice Managers and their teams in several key areas:

- **Workforce Support:** We are advocating for increased investment in the General Practice workforce to ensure that practices have the necessary resources to meet patient needs.
- **Training and Development:** We continue to promote awareness of training and development needs for Practice Managers to ensure they are equipped with the skills needed to navigate the evolving healthcare landscape.
- **Innovation in Care Delivery:** We are supporting Practice Managers to look at introducing innovative care delivery models, such as digital consultations and multi-disciplinary teams, to improve access and efficiency.
- **Patient Engagement:** We are encouraging practices to continue engaging with patients through various feedback mechanisms, ensuring that patient voices are heard and acted upon.

The IGPM remains dedicated to supporting General Practice Managers in their vital role of delivering high-quality care to patients. We recognise the challenges posed by the increased demand and are committed to working collaboratively with healthcare professionals, policymakers, and patients to address these issues. The IGPM will continue to interact with NHS England and the new Government to call for increased funding. We are also keen to continue collaboration on how practice performance can be effectively monitored and reported.



Kay Keane



Robyn Clark



Nicola Davies

Directors of the Institute of General Practice Management, for and, on behalf of our National Leads and team of Regional Representatives throughout the United Kingdom.