

**Cambridgeshire & Peterborough General Practice  
Response to the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care  
Thérèse Coffey’s Statement around GP Access - September 2022**



We are **100 GPs short** across our local system. That’s the equivalent of almost **137,000 patients** effectively **without a GP in Cambs & Peterborough**.

No wonder practice services feel so stretched!

**Did you know...**

**1 in 2 patients** across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough who need access to their GP Team get an appointment **within 24 hours** of contacting their practice?

**Did you know...**

Across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, the 88 GP Surgeries offer between **400,000 – 500,000** appointments **each and every single month**. That’s around **50% of your local population!**

Your GP wait may be hours, days, or weeks **but you may still be waiting around a year for a hospital appointment**.

Waits for operations can be **even longer**.

Even suspected cancer referrals, ideally seen by a consultant within a fortnight, may take longer. This is not the fault of NHS staff who are working harder than ever.

**We share your frustration. We all feel the same.**

On 22 September, the new Health Secretary told the media that “GPs would be required to offer an appointment on request within two weeks” (regardless of clinical need). But when it came to Parliament, Ms Coffey **changed her statement** to “GPs may be expected to offer an appointment on request”.

Deliberate misinformation or misrepresentation of general practice helps no one. In fact, it doesn’t really matter which words she used - it’s still an unachievable expectation without the doctors and nurses available, or additional funding to deliver it. She might as well have promised you a unicorn.

**Don’t fall for the political spin.**

**Political spin is damaging to the NHS workforce:**

By piling pressure on GPs & practice staff who can’t meet impossible targets, spin can trigger complaints, aggression, and abuse. That can lead to staff leaving the NHS workforce, and for patients that can mean losing “your” doctor, and longer waits to be seen.

**Political spin is damaging to patients:**

It is unfair to make impossible promises to patients. We have a duty to put clinical need over personal want. There aren’t enough NHS staff to go round to offer everybody whatever they want, whenever they want it.

**It’s not access – it’s capacity**

Everyone’s working hard, but **general practice is the only part of the NHS to be offering even more appointments and more access**, than when compared with before the pandemic (according to NHS Digital). That is extraordinary when we think about how many GPs and Practices Nurses we’ve lost in the past three years.

**Extra phone lines** need **extra staff** to answer them, and **extra clinicians** to see you and your family.

**A million volunteers** might be helpful, but how long will they volunteer for? **Wouldn’t it be better** to have a **sustainable workforce policy** to deliver **new trained staff?**

**We must keep the NHS staff we have. We can’t afford to lose any more. Please help by being kind, patient, and understanding. We are doing our best for you.** 