

## **Chair's Report 2023**

Another twelve months have passed and the hope that sprung from the emergence from the pandemic has materialised into little. We have seen exceptionally high levels of demand across General Practice, pushing many to the brink. The reasons for this demand are many. We are the natural holding pen for all who await definitive intervention, from a system that is struggling to function. We have seen a new wave of health behaviour, with celebrity promotion of diagnoses and media hysteria driving demand for services to levels never seen before. We have also had one of the most difficult winters with a multitude of viral and bacterial infections generating significant need.

The 2018 contract, despite significant local efforts, has been stymied by disastrous work force planning, inadequate funding even if we had the staff and a lack of specification despite 5 years of opportunity and significant governmental pressure to provide this.

We have also seen an assault on the funding of General Practice. The £15 million promised as a payment to reflect the failings of the contract was replaced by £10 million to muddle through one of the busiest winters on record. It's highly concerning that in doing this, Scottish Government has technically not reimbursed Practices for a failed contract. As is the fact that underspend in the 2018 contract was clawed back by Government, removing the ability for HSCPs to plan medium to long term investment and instead encourage a "use it or lose it" approach going forward. Also, for the first time in modern history, the uplift to GMS has not matched that awarded to our Agenda for Change colleagues, demonstrating that Scottish Government seem to value the acute sector more than those that deliver in General Practice.

Furthermore, inflation has had a major impact on us all this year. Especially when it has not been accurately reflected in our contract. This is true of the Enhanced Services, which in some areas have seen no growth for decades. That is why, for the first time, Lothian LMC rejected the conditions of the ES package and wrote to all Practices to consider the business case for each. We have mixed emotions about the response which is that most have resigned to carry on the same work, fearful they either lose what little income is available or worry for the impact it would have on their patients. As the representative body this offers a mixture of frustration over how will we ever get a better deal but also admiration and respect for those we represent, putting patients first.

So, just as General Practice has gone through a very difficult year, we will endure, we will overcome, and times will get better. General Practice is the absolute key to free at the point of need, universal healthcare and one day this will be properly recognised. I am truly humbled and honoured to represent the finest of professions and will continue to defend this in all arenas and platforms both locally and nationally. Thank you.

Dr. Iain Morrison

Chair, Lothian Local Medical Committee

March 2023