

## **Letter to Primary Care Committee**

### **Background/Timeline**

**8/10/21**

I visited my GP re concerns about unstable blood pressure despite taking medication. During the consultation I mentioned I had moved house out of the practice boundary and asked how I made application to stay with my current practice. We discussed it had been a particularly difficult 18 months having gone from hardly seeing my GP to a catalogue of difficult medical problems: Shingles, Lyme disease, high blood pressure that was proving difficult to stabilise In addition I had a rapid 2 stone weight loss with exceptionally high Blood sugar, GP suspected pancreatic cancer but fortunately a CT scan ruled it out. The cause of the High B/S was Type 1 diabetes and just to add to my distress at that time my mum died in December 2020.

Because of these issues I was feeling very anxious and vulnerable and the last thing I needed was a change of GP. My GP was sympathetic and suggested it would be better for him to make the application on my behalf at the next practice meeting. I was extremely grateful to him and thought that because I had his support my request would be accepted particularly as the distance from the boundary to my new address was only 0.9 miles. I had also checked the NHS Guidance which says there are 2 reasons for refusal; a person needs multiple homes visits or the practice list is closed. Neither of those conditions applied, I have never had a home visit, the list is not (officially) closed. I was therefore expecting them to agree to keep me as a patient.

**15/10/21**

A letter was sent to me from the practice manager refusing my request and not giving a reason other than to say, *"It would be in my best interest to register with a medical practice nearer to my permanent home address."* It also said if I wanted to discuss it to ring the practice manager.

**8/11/21**

Returned home from France to find the letter, surprised and upset and also anxious as I had limited time to find a new GP and I had no idea how to go about it. I rang the Practice Manager and asked if he would reconsider, he said the list was already too full and they were looking to reduce the list. I said I had limited time and would struggle to do it before the 15<sup>th</sup> November and he offered to give me an extra month to find and register with a new practice.

**10/11/21**

I began the task of trying to find and register with a new practice. **(See part 2)**

**19/11/21**

I received 2 emails from Patient Online Services effectively telling me my practice had removed me from their list and cancelled my online access to everything

### **Part 2 Registering with a New Practice**

The letter I received from my practice, does not give any indication of how I go about finding a new practice. I didn't know which of the 6 Macclesfield practices I was eligible to register with, whose practice boundary was my house located in? I finally found out that I could register with any of the practices and chose one. This then started another difficult series of events to try and register as a patient. These events are as follows:

- I downloaded the application form from the website, completed it and then instead of posting it as was the suggestion I took it to the practice to save time.
- On my way up in the lift a big sign says IF YOU DO NOT HAVE AN APPOINTMENT GO HOME! I nearly did just that, but thankfully I carried on to reception.
- The receptionist (almost told me off) said it was the wrong form and why had I not come in and collected the correct forms. I asked her how I would know about the correct forms as the website told me to bring in the ones I had. She told me the website was out of date and then gave me some new forms
- The receptionist then told me I wouldn't be accepted as a patient until after I had seen the nurse and they had sent for and received my medical records. (It felt a bit like I was going for an interview!) The earliest appointment available was 2<sup>nd</sup> December and it would take 1 week to retrieve my records and I was not a registered patient until then. In terms of time it meant the earliest I would have a GP would be 9<sup>th</sup> December. I was told to not even think about trying to book an appointment before then as they would not allow me to do so.
- At the time I wasn't too worried as I thought I had until Middle of December to find and register with a GP. However my old practice did not extend my registration with them as they had agreed to do and on 15<sup>th</sup> of November removed me from the practice list. This effectively left me without any GP cover from 16<sup>th</sup> November until 9<sup>th</sup> December. (In fact on the day of writing this 15<sup>th</sup> December I am still not registered as my records appear to be missing.)

**2/12/21**

I attended my appointment with the nurse, I asked her why it took a week to retrieve my medical records as I was sure they were electronic and could be requested and received the same day. The nurse told me the process of being registered depended on how much time the admin staff had to load my information in to the system. She said they could do it the same day, the admin person I spoke to on the way out said it could take 2 to 3 weeks.

**6/12/21**

Despite numerous phone calls to various NHS agencies I am currently without a GP I have no access to online anything, repeat prescriptions, test results and most importantly I cannot prove I am vaccinated as the NHS can't give me enhanced access until my GP gives me a Linkage Key, an ODS code and an A/C ID. The practice says they cannot give me these as I am not a patient and they don't have my records.

**14/12/21**

I have rung the practice a number of times to chase up where my records are and the last time I spoke to them yesterday they said they have tried to find them and been unsuccessful so they can't do any more. They said it was up to me now to chase them myself and gave me an NHS England phone no to ring.

**15/12/21**

Rang the NHS no the practice gave me, when I finally got to speak to them they said I couldn't chase them up it was the GPS responsibility. I said they won't do any more searching and I can't make them, they suggested I try the Primary Care Regional team or Primary Care England.

My apologies for the long winded communication it serves to demonstrate to the committee the issues that have been a problem for me, however I suspect there a lot more people out there have the same or worse experience. As a previous chair of ECCCG I have some knowledge and understanding of how the system works and I can't solve this. Consider how much more difficult this would be if someone with communication difficulties or serious vulnerabilities was going through a similar process? I suspect they would give up, and be left floating around the system because it appears there are no checks and balances as to what happened if they left one practice and didn't register with another.

Below are some Questions I would like the committee to consider and some suggestions to improve matters. They are mostly process issues therefore I am not expecting a reply today, but I would like some assurances the committee will consider them.

### **Questions**

The request to stay with the Practice was not an unreasonable one I wasn't moving miles away, (0.9 miles outside the boundary) I didn't need and never have had a home visit and the practice list is not closed. In addition I had the strong support of my GP. This leads me to think the practice made a decision based on my increased health needs or it is a way of closing the list by stealth.

1. I would like the committee to consider the inconsistencies across the area and why given all GPs are now on the same contract why some consider the NHS guidance on the matter and others do not. (?Postcode Lottery)

The letter sent to me removing me from the list gave me no information as to how to find a new GP i.e. which GP practice boundary am I located in, what is the process of registering with that practice. If a patient is not registered with a practice a patient could temporary register with any practice if they needed emergency care

2. I would like the committee to consider the production of a standard letter that gives patients the information above and particularly includes "*Accessible Information*" for people with communication difficulties. In addition someone should review practice websites on a regular basis to ensure their information is up to date and in line with their contract.

I am considered to be a vulnerable patient and as such the practice should have an enhanced duty of care towards me. I needed some blood pressure checks and blood tests and when I spoke to my old practice they told me to ask the new one, the new one won't register me for 2 weeks, the answer was "Do your own". By removing me from their list knowing I have not had time to find another practice, despite saying they would not do that I am left floating about in the ether desperately trying to find some basic care. All of this increases my anxiety and raises my blood pressure, the very thing I am trying to avoid. None of this would have been necessary if they had waited for me to register with a new practice before removing me from their list which they seem to have done with unseemly haste. I would say they had failed in their duty of care towards me (and how many other similar patients) leaving me to consider if they understood or accepted their notion of a duty of care and their responsibility to maintain the safety and wellbeing of their patients.

One month after they removed me from their list I am still not registered with a new practice.

3. I would like the committee to consider if a patient is going to be removed from a list should there be a system in place that ensures patients, (particularly vulnerable ones) are not removed from lists until they are assured the patient has registered with a new practice. This could be achieved by a request for medical records from the new practice. Without a system in place how can the practice fulfil their obligations in terms of duty of care or satisfy themselves that there is continuity of care for their patients?