



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

14 August 2018

Dr Thomas Reichhelm
Dr Jonathan West
Dr David Carter
Dr Prateek Mehta
Dr Andrew Swindlehurst
Partners – West Malling Group Practice
Milverton
116 High Street
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ME19 6NE

Dear Partners,

As you will be aware, ensuring that West Malling Group Practice serves residents and patients in West Malling, Kings Hill, Leybourne and surrounding villages is crucial. I am concerned at the growing number of complaints I am receiving from people unable to get an appointment with the Practice and would request that you urgently look at the systems in place to book an appointment.

All too often the complaints I hear are the same. Patients phone up as close to 8.15am as possible to make an appointment. Despite this people end up well down the queue, with the numbers stretching well beyond double figures most days. Even when patients get through to someone, an appointment is not guaranteed and it can be impossible to book one for a suitable time in the next few days. It is clear that the current system of booking appointments across the Practice is no longer working.

While I appreciate the severe pressures on the NHS, it is clear that the problems here are specific to West Malling Group Practice. It is hard to get appointments at other GPs in the area I represent, but none have systems where the only way to do so is to be on the phone at the right second at 8.15am. For many this is inconvenient – they could be travelling to work, dropping children at school, or could lose connection considering the poor mobile service in the area. I know that you operate an open-list system to serve new patients as well, but I am concerned that the benefits of this are being overshadowed by the inability of existing patients to access medical care.

As you know, the consequence of the failure to get an appointment can be severe. Not only does it place greater strain on acute services for people to access care immediately, but it damages the viability of the area. I know of residents who have looked to register with other local practices instead, and also of people who are concerned about moving and investing in the area because of the lack of access to a GP.

Member of Parliament for Tonbridge and Malling

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This, coupled with the ongoing issues around the future of your West Malling branch, mean that very many residents I speak to have declining faith in the organisation of the Practice to cope with the population increase which is proposed for the area. I would therefore be grateful if we could meet urgently to discuss how the Practice can implement better structures to serve its patients, and also if you could provide an update on your future plans on West Malling High Street.

Best wishes,

Tom Tugendhat

TOM TUGENDHAT