

Dear Editor

Crumbling GP services are due to lack of human sense, not just lack of funding

Your headlined article *That's why it's so hard to see your GP!* (29 July 2019) yet again documents how our service is increasingly stressed and inaccessible, and so unsafe.

You rightly point to some financial reasons for this: extra demands on the NHS but no extra money (the Austerity Years); more recent and unprecedented tax of doctors' pensions. So both possible recruits and established veterans are discouraged from either joining or continuing the work. These are both true and important.

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But your article did not mention a more important factor: how the nature of the job itself has changed.

Until the 1990s, General Practice was a very popular choice for doctors: recruitment and tenure were robust and very adequate. This picture was reflected in accessibility and popularity for patients.

Yet, despite this, in the last thirty years, each government has forced in reforms. Each promised to 'drive up standards', make efficiency-savings, increase fail-safety and accountability. What has actually happened? Your erstwhile local and (mostly) friendly and happy family doctor (remember them?) has probably lost autonomy and been moved into a much larger, more distant, unhappily micromanaged

practice where the ethos is no-one-knows-anyone-but-do-as-you're-told.

Increasingly, both for patients and doctors, these feel like craven and frantic factories operating impersonally in a police state.

Serial government-appointed experts may tell us that this is what is necessary, and what is good for us. Yet the mounting evidence is otherwise: it is that the serial reforms have mostly failed in their tasks (assuring efficiency, economy, safety and access) by over-regulating a mostly healthily functioning service into one that destroys the deeper personal and professional satisfactions of the doctors. So we now have the tragic and crazy situation where the 'modernising' reforms have become both intolerable and unworkable, and so undermine the very service they are there to protect!

Increasing government training funding may (possibly) lure new recruits, but they are unlikely to stay – unless we dismantle the increasing culture of policed industrialisation.

Our NHS doesn't just need an infusion of more money; it needs a restoration of our better human sense.

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