The Vote to Remove Home Visits from GP Contract

LMCs in England have voted to remove home visits from the core GP contract, arguing that spiralling workload and workforce shortages mean the profession no longer has the capacity to deliver them.

So the LMCs conference backed a motion calling for the GPC to *negotiate with NHS England* to remove home visits from the contract but the GPC lead on contracts warned delegates that the likelihood of the GPC being able to successfully negotiate such a change to the contract was 'extremely low' even though backing the proposal sent a clear political message.

GPs are desperately short of:

* capacity
* staff
* time
* funding

They say that dropping home visits could free up two or three hours of a GP's time on an average day, which would enable Practices to improve care for all patients and allow GPs to choose to see the patients at home 'who we really need to see', such as those at the end-of- life.

Those against the motion argued that home visits were core to general practice and enabled the profession to provide 'cradle to grave' care.

They said it would sell the heart and soul of our profession away and would allow people to say, "those GPs don’t care about us, they don’t care about us when we’re very sick, when we’re very vulnerable and when we’re dying".

‘The idea that recommissioning this service away to another team means that they will care more, better than me, than you, who has known the patient for 20 years, is just not true. It will disrupt fundamentally the relationship that we have with patients in front of us if that patient does not trust that when they are older, sicker and more unwell that we will still be their doctor and we will still care for them. Far from being old-fashioned, home visits are needed more and more as our patients are living longer,' she added. 'Cutting home visits is cutting to the heart of general practice and what we are here for.'

But supporting the motion did not mean that doctors would*not* carry out home visits, *only that they should be reserved for those that truly need them* rather than being seen as an entitlement.

GPs said:

'I want to speak about colleagues who are literally dying on their feet or taking their own lives because they cannot cope,'

'Are we sending the message that we will maintain ourselves as a sink hole for everything in the NHS, that we will take it all on board, that we will be the Superman contract?

'This is about workload. When do we say to the 40,000 other GPs out there that we are going to stand up and tell the government that we’ve had enough and say we can’t do this anymore?'

‘The motion is a chance to 'draw a line in the sand' ‘

'There’s nothing wrong with the idea of discharging patients early from hospitals, but it is the biggest transfer of care from secondary to primary care that we’ve ever seen, patients that come out earlier are sicker, there are more of them at home and that means so much more work for us.'