

17th May 2023

CONFIDENTIAL

<name anonymised>

Dear <name anonymised>

Thank you for reaching out to us and sharing your concerns. The Patient Participation Group (PPG) forwarded your open letter addressed to me on 11 May 2023. I appreciate your feedback and want to assure you that we are committed to addressing your questions and improving our services.

About Modality:

Modality is a traditional NHS GP Partnership that serves over 450,000 patients across 50 sites and 9 regions in the UK. We are owned and led by like-minded partners who are committed to preserving the best parts of General Practice and futureproofing it.

Our GP partners are the same ones who were previously running the practices before becoming partners of Modality. When I first met them many years ago, they were ready to throw in the towel because the workload was simply too high (and even more so now). They were very stressed, feeling overworked and underappreciated. Modality and the concept of working together across multiple sites saved the practice from closure and, for Judges Close, Ship Street, Crawley Down Health Centre and Park View, the Modality Mid Sussex Division was formed.

I sincerely hope you will agree that our GP partners are not only great doctors but also genuinely kind individuals who have dedicated their careers to serve the community. Their level of professionalism and commitment to delivering high-quality patient care remains unchanged since joining Modality. If it was about money, there are many other options that are far more lucrative than running the practice!

Our local GP partners and the wider practice team, including allied health professionals (e.g., paramedic practitioners, clinical pharmacists, first contact physiotherapists) and non-clinical staff, work together to provide services within the confines of funding available locally and ensuring safety is not compromised.

Modality Mid Sussex is funded by, and accountable to, NHS Sussex and operates as a regular GP practice under the national NHS contractual conditions. Our practices share a central team that I oversee which covers a suite of back-office support functions such as finance, payroll, HR, sourcing, digital capabilities such as automation. I may not be a doctor, but I have signed up to abide by the same values and ethos as my fellow partners.

There are no external owners or investors and no one telling our GP partners what they can or cannot do. As we are not a company, there are no shareholders, nor do we have a AGM for you to attend. If the experience you have received falls short of the standard we expect from our practice, please do contact our complaints team:

<https://www.modalitypartnership.nhs.uk/modalitymidsussex>

We take all complaints seriously and aim to resolve them as quickly and effectively as possible. You can also contact our regulators, Care Quality Commission, and/or NHS Sussex (per above, they are the commissioners of the service). The PPG is also another avenue available to you to provide input.

The Problem:

The long and short of it is that current demand way outstrips supply – not just in primary care but across the NHS. It has been like this for some time – even before COVID which further exacerbated demand and created massive backlogs. The pressures across the system have resulted in unintended overspills from other parts of the NHS and other care sectors into primary care and vice versa.

We are not making excuses, but we cannot fix everything. We are focused on what we can control and influence. There is plenty we need to work on, and we have made progress. For a start, the practices are still running, and you may have noticed we have upgraded the facilities in the hope of attracting more staff.

The Statistics:

We appreciate the time you have spent interpreting the statistics provided in recent communications. It is worth noting that appointments are not just delivered by GPs. Over time, we have built a multi-disciplinary team (e.g., paramedic practitioners, clinical pharmacists, first contact physiotherapists, social prescribers, care coordinators) to reduce the reliance on GPs. This multi-disciplinary approach has been established across all GP / primary care in England. Hopefully this helps explain the queries you had specifically on appointments.

The statistics referring to same-day appointments and those offered within two weeks relate to phone calls received requesting appointments. It is also important for you to know the level of appointments we currently provide exceeds what is contracted by the NHS. We recognise this may mean little to patients who are struggling to access the service but hopefully it is useful information in relation to your specific queries. We also monitor workload and the wellbeing of our staff closely to ensure we operate safely.

Future Development:

Working with the Modality Mid Sussex Patient Participation Group (PPG) and the Integrated Care Board (local commissioners), we have developed an improvement and development plan for Modality Mid Sussex.

The plan was shared with the PPG on 2 May 2023, and the minutes of the meeting will soon be available at: <https://modalitymidsussexppg.org/about-us/minutes-of-meetings/>. The same plan was also discussed with MPs Ms Mims Davies and Mr Jeremy Quinn on 5 May 2023. They were both supportive and encouraged us to keep forging forward.

The meeting minutes from an earlier PPG meeting covered where we are with Push Doctor, which you had asked about. In the past month, we have made significant progress with our efforts to recruit more GPs. In addition to securing remote support from our Salaried GPs in Hull, we have been successful in recruiting a permanent Salaried GP who will start in August. An existing Salaried GP has also agreed to provide further sessions remotely. We have also received additional interest and are in the process of interviewing the candidates.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be inviting patients to come forward to work collaboratively with us to contribute and help shape the future development of services locally.

Hull:

I note you are from Hull and have made specific reference to the decision our Modality Hull partners had made to close a site. Your conclusion that we closed the practice in Hull because of financial motivations was incorrect. For clarity, we did not close the surgery, we transferred patients to a nearby site because the Victorian house we were operating in was very run down and ultimately not fit for purpose. We also had concerns about accessibility especially for elderly patients who were not able to access the consultation rooms on the second floor of the building. It was not feasible to install a lift. You may not be aware, but we have also since successfully moved to a new facility called West Hull Health Hub in late 2021.

Thank you again for taking the time to share your concerns with us. We hope the above is helpful. If you wish to discuss your concerns further, we would be happy to set up a meeting with you.

Yours sincerely,



Vincent Sai
Group CEO and Partner
Modality Partnership