For Immediate release (Thursday 24th July 2008)

Press Release from: General Practitioners Committee West Midlands

GPs are being frustrated from providing improved access to their patients by the Department of Health say senior West Midlands GPs

Senior general practitioners from across the West Midlands met today (Thursday 24th July 2008), and were shocked to hear that local plans for improving access for patients are being turned down at the insistence of the Department of Health.

Dr Grant Ingrams (Secretary, General Practitioners Committee West Midlands) said: "Many General Practitioners are keen to provide improved access to their patients by offering appointments outside of the usual general practice hours - 8am to 6.30pm, only to find that their local arrangements are being thwarted by the Department of Health."

"General Practitioners have been listening to their patients, and in conjunction with the local Primary Care Trusts have been developing locally tailored plans, only to find these being turned down by the Department of Health."

"Lord Ara Darzi, Minister of Health, has promised that all 'All Change Will Be Locally Driven'(1), but this is another example where a centrally dictated one size fits all solution is being forced on the NHS to the detriment to the service and patients."

Examples of locally agreed benefits which the Department of Health is blocking include: providing nurse as well as doctor appointments; providing telephone appointments; more than one doctor to provide appointments at the same time; and small practices providing the service from a shared site.

Dr Grant Ingrams said: "Patients are used to modern high-quality general practice providing appointments with practice nurses and the convenience of appointments by telephone. I do not understand why the government is blocking these innovative services."

"Many practices are situated in areas where safety is a significant issue at night. Small practices providing services together, or more than one doctor working at a time would improve safety for both staff and their patients."

"The approach taken by the government will mean that fewer practices will be able to provide improved access to their patients. "

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

1 NHS Next Stage Review Leading Local Change, May 2008

Contact:
Dr Grant Ingrams
Secretary, General Practitioners Committee West Midlands,
36 Harborne Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 3DP
Telephone: 07973 630 838
Email: gji@nhs.net