

Health chiefs out of touch

with crisis in general practice

Katie Gibbons

Health chiefs repeatedly missed the growing crisis in GP practices over a number of years and are now "flying blind" in their attempts to tackle it, a report has found.

The government has been accused of ignoring "the ever-worsening" situation. While patient consultations have

soared by 15 per cent in the past five years, the GP workforces has increased by only 4.75 per cent

Very little national data has been collected on family doctor services in the past decade, making the pressures faced by GPs "largely invisible" to health officials, an investigation by the King's Fund think tank found. Its report, published today, concludes that if

such data had been available, the Department of Health and NHS England could have taken steps to alleviate the unprecedented pressures that surgeries are now failing to cope with.

"The government are flying blind. It is incomprehensible that they are attempting to assess services using out-of-date information," said Beccy Baird, author of the report. This contrasts

with A&E departments, which are run using "almost real-time A&E data".

"The nature of work undertaken by GPs is becoming more complex," Ms Baird added.

"They are now involved in follow-ups, new treatments and medications, things that would have previously been done in hospitals."

David Aaronovitch, page 25

Times May 5th 2016