



19<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Colleague

Please see below for your information our latest updates during the Covid-19 pandemic:

### **Roadmap out of lockdown (England)**

In response to the [Government's announcement to ease some lockdown measures](#) in England from this week, the BMA has said that the plan is too fast, too confusing and too risky. Since then further guidance has been released and the BMA will continue to scrutinise this carefully and challenge government when necessary. Read the Government's recovery strategy [here](#). Read the full BMA statement [here](#).

In light of this announcement, GP practices could be faced with new workload as many people will be anxious about returning to a workplace where adequate social distancing measures have not been put in place, leading to more requests for fit notes and letters to employers, with people who cannot work from home being urged to return to work. Patients making these requests should be directed to discuss this with their employers, and employers should be making reasonable adjustments and performing appropriate risk assessments for their staff, with occupational health support when necessary. In this situation a fit note should not be required. If this phase is not managed extremely carefully there is a risk of the virus spreading and putting renewed strain on the NHS, including GP services. One of the Westminster Government's key tests for easing lockdown is ensuring the NHS can cope – and this of course must include general practice.

As we move in to the next phase of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the need to both deliver services to our patients whilst also continuing with the challenge of on-going viral circulation, the GPC knows that many areas are considering how this can be done safely. It's also leading many to consider what has changed in the last couple of months that we want to retain and what the 'new normal' General Practice should look like. Wessex LMC has produced two discussion documents to help with this thinking and has agreed for them to be shared. A [briefing document](#) includes a summary, key recommendations and a conclusion and a [full document](#) provides links and examples and further explores the questions practices are facing currently.

## GP and practice COVID-19 toolkit

Following the announcement about easing the lockdown in England, the Government has published [guidance for employers to help getting more people back to work and operating safely](#). However, as this does not specifically include healthcare settings, the GPC would advise practices to refer to their [toolkit for GPs and practices](#), and in particular the [section on reducing COVID-19 transmission](#), which refers to social distancing within GP practices.

The toolkit, which is updated regularly, should also help to answer many of the questions the GPC have been getting on a large range of topics relating to COVID-19.

## Care Home Arrangements

Following GPC lobbying of government on this issue, care homes are now being supported to rapidly upgrade their ability to do virtual consultations. These changes include the rollout of [NHSmail](#) to care homes and domiciliary care providers, supporting remote consultations, and [reducing social isolation and loneliness for care home residents](#) by providing tablet devices capable of secure video calling, and increased access to up-to-date and accurate information for care professionals through the new [Care workforce app](#). In addition CCG directors of nursing should now be assisting local authorities with training in infection prevention and control in care homes.

Practices and LMCs can use the NHSEI [guidance on how practices can support care homes during the pandemic](#), working with others in their area to do what they can to support their local care homes at this critical time. Most areas now have arrangements in place.

The [NHSEI primary care bulletin](#) today (15 May) clarified that the clinical lead for the service is not also medically responsible and accountable for the care of individual care home residents. Medical responsibility and accountability for the care of individual care home residents remains with their registered GP – and there may be residents with different registered GPs within a care home. NHSEI does not expect residents to be re-registered.

NHSEI have stated that a reimbursement mechanism for general practice will be established to help practices meet the additional costs of COVID-19 related activity which cannot be met from existing practice resources. Reimbursement will be managed through clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), on the basis of national guidance.

## Preparing for Flu Immunisation 2020/21

NHSEI has published the [annual flu letter for the 2020/21 programme](#). It is recognised that delivering the flu immunisation programme is likely to be more challenging this year because of the impact of COVID-19. NHSEI will publish further guidance nearer the planned start of the programme in September 2020, but in the meantime, practices should continue to plan for the programme as usual. The letter sets out which groups are eligible for flu vaccination (same as last year but different vaccinations for different groups) and how to prepare for this autumn's vaccination campaign.

## NHS Digital national GP data extraction to support COVID-19 planning and research (England)

NHS Digital has issued a DPN outlining a framework for a tactical GPES extraction for planning and research related to COVID-19. This extraction was requested by the BMA and RCGP as means of relieving the burden being placed on GPs at this time to provide data for research purposes. Under this interim arrangement, NHSD will become the data controller for a predetermined set of data extracted from GP records in England with all requests to practices redirected to them.

BMA and RCGP will have sight of the process for requesting this data and will regularly meet with NHSD to review applicants who wish to use it. The [DPN](#) contains all relevant information on the extraction and in this [NHS Digital circular](#). NHSD have asked that all practices register by 27 May.

## BMA COVID-19 Webpage and Guidance

The [BMA COVID-19 webpage](#) is updated regularly with guidance and links to official information:

- [General practice toolkit](#)
- [Model terms of engagement for a GP providing temporary COVID-19 services](#)
- [Terms and conditions for sessional GPs](#)
- [BMA's COVID-19 ethical guidance](#)

## RCGP e-learning available for free

RCGP eLearning Resources are freely available to all until 30/6/20.

Visit <https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/>

## PCN DES Briefing and Webinar

The PCN Network has produced [a short briefing](#) on the benefits and challenges to assist you in making your decision about your involvement in the Primary Care Network Direct Enhanced Services (DES) contract.

To further explore the key issues surrounding the DES, the PCN Network is hosting a webinar [The PCN DES: A discussion for the undecided](#) on Wednesday 27 May at 12.30pm.

[Sign up here for the webinar](#)

Kind regards

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