



30<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Colleague

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

### **Vaccination and Immunisation updates and training -Thinking ahead to the flu season**

Public Health England published this on 26<sup>th</sup> June.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immunisation-training-guidance-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/guidance-on-immunisation-training-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

It states 'staff should be allowed to vaccinate as long as both they and their employers believe they are competent and confident to safely do so'. Kent LMC interpret this to mean that if staff are unable to access the usual update training but fulfil the criteria stated they can participate in the normal vaccination and immunisation programmes.

It also states that e-learning is acceptable. This is available on e learning for health which can be accessed via learning pool to ensure record keeping in the staff members profile. Providing adequate supervision and mentoring are in place it is possible to train a new staff member in this way.

Invicta Health Learning have been working hard to find alternative ways of updating staff in preparation for the 2020 flu season. We hope this is good news for practices.

### **Trust GPs to lead: learning from the response to COVID-19 within general practice in England**

The results of the BMA's fifth and **sixth tracker survey** highlighted the scale of extra work being taken on by GPs during the pandemic, something that is continuing to increase. The report, **Trust GPs to lead: learning from the response to COVID-19 within general practice in England**, which was published this week, explores how these demands can be managed both in the short and long term.

The report sets out five principles that must be addressed as part of learning the lessons of COVID-19 as follows:

- Capitalise on the greater autonomy provided to general practice during the pandemic and incorporate the positive learning into new ways of working.
- There must be a significant reduction in the level of regulation within the system. The burden of regulation has previously fallen on all practices rather than focusing on appropriate support for the very small number of practices when this is required.
- There must be a significant reduction in the level of bureaucracy and duplication caused by information requests from Government departments, national regulators, commissioners, local providers of health services and many other organisations.
- It is essential to increase the level of digital and technological support for practices including a rapid rollout of appropriate, safe, reliable, robust and secure digital

technology and consultation software (including video where appropriate) for practices to use.

- GPs should be empowered as clinical leaders in their communities, strengthening and resourcing the development of primary care networks and giving them the necessary flexibility to use available resources, workforce and partnerships within their area.

The report also sets out a range of solutions that will enable GPs and practices to manage the ongoing demands of responding to COVID-19, and looks at GPs being supported to continue delivering innovative patient-focused local services for both the short and long term.

Read the full BMA statement about the survey and the *Trust GPs to lead* report [here](#)

### **BAME doctors not being given access to COVID-19 risk assessments**

The BMA's [sixth tracker survey](#) also showed that more than a third of BAME doctors in the UK are still not being given access to potentially life-saving COVID-19 risk assessments. The survey also showed revealed that BAME doctors are still less likely to feel fully protected from coronavirus compared to their white colleagues (29% compared to 46%), and far more likely to often feel pressured into treating patients without the proper protective equipment<sup>4</sup> (7% compared to 2.5%). Read the BMA statement [here](#).

The BMA updated their [guidance on risk assessments](#) last week to include two new sections for GP practices looking at the implications of risk assessments for practices and the risk assessment tools that are available to practices to use.

In response to the BMA's letter to Simon Stevens earlier this month and their lobbying on these issues, NHSEI have issued a [letter](#) which sets out that CCGs should commission an occupational health service to support practices with this risk assessment process. This should be made freely available to practices as soon as possible through local OH capacity, or by commissioning more to complement existing OH services via this [Dynamic Purchasing Solution](#), if additional capacity or access outside normal working hours is needed. CCGs are asked to assure that this is happening comprehensively and speedily in their areas.

### **New to Partnership Payment Scheme**

The New to Partnership Payment Scheme is now live!

The Scheme was announced in the 'Update to the GP Contract agreement 2020/21 - 2023/24' and aims to increase the number and range of healthcare professionals joining partnerships within a practice. It couples a training allowance to support development of necessary partnership skills, with a financial payment for participants that hold partnership for 5 years.

Applicants cannot previously have been a partner in England.

[Application and guidance documents can be found here.](#)

### **Shielding update**

The [Government has announced](#) that from Monday 6 July, the advisory guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people who are currently shielding from coronavirus, will be eased, and that they will be able to gather in groups of up to 6 people outdoors and form a 'support bubble' with another household. The guidance will be relaxed further in August, should the reduction in viral prevalence continue. In relation to this the Government in England has informed practices that it will [write](#) to those on the shielded list to make them aware of the updated guidance. Read the [Government's guidance on shielding](#) for patients.

The NHS will continue to maintain the Shielded Patient List in order to enable targeted advice and support to those who are most vulnerable should that be required in the future. Practices should therefore continue to add or remove patients from this list as is clinically appropriate. In addition, we are talking to NHSEI about research being done that could refine the identification of those who are most at risk and would benefit from shielding should that necessary.

### GP Standard Operating Procedure updated

NHSE/I have added two new sections to the [GP Standard Operating Procedure](#) and updated it with some additional information and links for ease of access. The updated sections are on:

1. Outbreak management in the context of COVID-19 – with a recommendation to review business continuity plans.
2. Suspected or diagnosed cancers, including ongoing cancer treatment – information on referral into secondary care.

### BMA issues holiday guidance ahead of domestic tourism return

Following the [guidance](#) issued by GPC England about the support practices can continue to offer their patients when travelling on holiday this year in order to support colleagues in tourist areas, the BMA has today issued further advice and public health information for the public. This comes just days after pictures of a crowded Bournemouth beach raised concerns over social distancing.

The BMA's public messaging campaign<sup>1</sup> urges people to:

- Don't travel if you're ill, or have any symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. cough, high temperature, loss of smell or taste)
- Have a plan for self-isolation if you, or anybody in your 'bubble', develops symptoms or are told to do so by the official NHS Test and Trace service. You will likely be required to self-isolate for 14 days.
- If you take medicines prescribed by your doctor, make sure you have enough with you to last for your time away
- Practise good social distancing and hand washing while you are away from home
- Wear a face covering whenever you are mixing with others outside your 'bubble' and cannot social distance, particularly when you are indoors.

To read more about the principles [see PDF here](#)

### BMA COVID-19 guidance

The BMA continues to regularly update its [toolkit for GPs and practices](#), which should help to answer many questions relating to COVID-19. There is also guidance on the following topics:

- [Model terms of engagement for a GP providing temporary COVID-19 services](#)
- [Terms and conditions for sessional GPs](#)

For further information, see the BMA's [COVID-19 Webpage](#) with all the latest guidance including links to the BMA's [COVID-19 ethical guidance](#) and [priorities for easing lockdown](#) published last week.

### Mental health and wellbeing

The BMA's latest [tracker survey](#) revealed high levels of exhaustion and stress amongst doctors. The BMA continues to offer [wellbeing services](#) and confidential 24/7 counselling and peer support for all doctors and medical students, as well as their partners and

dependents, on 0330 123 1245. For hard copies of the BMA Wellbeing [poster](#), please email [wellbeingsupport@bma.org.uk](mailto:wellbeingsupport@bma.org.uk)

Read the BMA's report on the [mental health and wellbeing of the medical workforce](#) which sets out ten recommendations to be addressed to protect staff during the pandemic and in the future.

### Practices in difficulty during Covid-19

We recognise that operating during the pandemic has brought additional challenges and pressures on practices. The LMC continues to be available to speak to individuals or practices that find themselves in personal, professional or financial difficulty.

Please contact the LMC by telephone on 01622 851 197; or via email on [info@kentlmc.org](mailto:info@kentlmc.org), and we will arrange a call back for you.

### Offer of Virtual Group Consultations briefing session – (A General Practice Nurse 10 Point Plan Initiative)

This is being shared with practices at the request of the CCG

Dear Colleagues,

Dates: 21st or 23rd July

Times: 1-2pm

(only required to attend ONE session)

The Experience Led Care Programme have been commissioned by NHSE/I to run a national training scheme for Virtual Group Clinics (formerly Group Consultations). We are pleased to be able to host two briefing sessions introducing Virtual Group Clinics.

As you may have been aware Kent and Medway was planning a training programme for practices interested in delivering group consultations in April and many of you had signed up to the programme. Unfortunately the programme was paused as a result of COVID -19, - but now we have a fantastic new opportunity to roll it out virtually.

Following attendance at the briefing session practice teams can go on to join the national scheme which provides 2.5 hours of free online training. As part of a GPN 10 Point Plan initiative, local participants can receive additional training and expert support to start their own groups. An information flyer is attached.

The Briefing is open to GPNs, Practice & Network Managers, PCN clinical directors, GPN leads and others who have interest in finding out more about virtual groups clinics across Kent and Medway such as Commissioners. The sessions will discuss the benefits to patients and staff and the practicalities of running groups. These sessions will also be recorded for people to view later if they cannot join live.

To register your place to attend on one of the briefing sessions, please email either Adenike Omotayo [adenikeomotayo@nhs.net](mailto:adenikeomotayo@nhs.net) or Sharon Lee [sharonlee2@nhs.net](mailto:sharonlee2@nhs.net) to confirm your attendance. The sessions will be run via MS Teams.

***Reminder email with link will be shared to those registered a few days prior to the events.***

Kind Regards

Sharon Lee/Adenike Omotayo

## **Payment Proposals for GP Public Health Services**

We have heard from KCC that they are continuing to work on payment proposals for GP Public Health Services between July to October in light of how service delivery may have changed due to Covid-19. The proposals will strike a balance between ensuring continued cash flow, additional costs per appointment due to covid-19 and managing budget pressures. Although it is likely the payment proposals will not be finalised by the start of July, they will be finalised and ready to share shortly into July.

We will let you know the details as soon as we have them. It will not be a rolling over of the support package we agreed until end of July but they have accepted that we cannot deliver services as before.

## **Occupational Health Assessments**

Heales are commissioned to provide Occupational Health Services for GPs in Primary Care. For all GP's in the Kent area who are in need of an occupational health risk assessment as a result of COVID-19 including BAME clinicians, can be risk assessed for their return to work as well as general health.

Each GP would have to refer/be referred via their NHS practice. The COVID-19 Return to Work referral can be made through referring a Health Surveillance case and selecting COVID-19 whether the employee has taken a test or not. The employee questionnaire has also been updated to include the COVID-19 Heart Age risk assessment which is based on a study of 17 million patient records. When the referral is submitted from the main system or a portal the employee questionnaire is sent via secure link and SMS to the employee who may complete the questionnaire and upload test results if they have them. This is then assigned to the OH practitioner to undertake an OH risk assessment based on the referral and employee response (and any other known medical information), including the new COVID-19 Heart Age score to provide a Health Surveillance Certificate (fit for work) with accompanying Management Advice where needed.

NHSE will fund the Health Surveillance cases for General Practitioners under Schedule 1, but the referrals must come via the portal for each practice that is registered with Heales with their NHS practice code.

## **Other COVID 19 resources**

[BMJ – news and resources](#)  
[RCGP COVID-19 information](#)  
[NHSE/I primary care bulletins](#)  
[NICE resources](#)

See this week's GP bulletin [here](#).

Kind regards  
The Kent Local Medical Committee