



19th October 2020

Dear Colleague

Please see below our latest updates for your information:

New three tier lockdown approach and BMA recommendations to help reduce spread of COVID-19

The rapid rise across the country in the number of people with COVID-19 is already putting a significant strain on general practice services. GPs and their teams have responded incredibly well throughout the pandemic, remaining open, maintaining services and going the extra mile to care for our patients. Recent media reports and briefings suggesting otherwise have not only been wrong but also deeply damaging to the morale of a dedicated and committed workforce. Dr Richard Vautrey made this situation clear in his one-to-one meetings with Sir Simon Stevens and Jo Churchill, the health minister with responsibility for primary care in England, earlier this month, and they both acknowledged the central and important role general practice has played and will play in dealing with the pandemic.

However as practices, out-of-hours providers, PCNs and other GP services do their best to prepare for the difficulties this winter will bring, the BMA expect NHSE/I and government to do far more to support us, and with parts of the country now back where they were in March that support must come urgently.

On Monday, the Government [announced the introduction of a new three-tier \(medium, high, very high\) lockdown approach for England](#). Prior to this, the BMA called for new, stronger measures to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 infection and published a series of [recommendations](#) which could help reduce the level of infection as well as supporting businesses and those who are in vulnerable groups. The BMA still believes the government needs to do more to properly respond to the growing infection rates. Their recommendations include:

Modify the current 'Rule of 6' with the rule that only two (exclusive) households can meet (and not exceed 6 people) – ideally outdoors, rather than indoors.

Making the wearing of face masks mandatory in all offices and working environments, unless you are working alone.

Wear masks in all outdoor settings where two metre distancing isn't possible.

It's notable that the Scottish Government has moved in line with the BMA's position and has now introduced a requirement for face coverings to be worn in indoor communal settings, such as staff canteens and corridors in workplaces. Read the full set of recommendations [here](#).

New advice for patients at high risk of COVID-19 infection

Following the announcement of a new three-tier lockdown approach in England, the Department of Health and Social Care published [updated guidance for those considered most clinically vulnerable, depending on the level of risk in their local area](#), in line with the new Local COVID Alert Levels framework.

This new guidance provides advice for the clinically vulnerable to follow in addition to the new rules and guidance for everyone based on the level of risk in their local area. The government are not yet suggesting the reintroduction of shielding arrangements that were paused in the

summer. More restrictive 'shielding' measures could be considered in the future in areas facing the highest risk and if that happens the Government will write to relevant people separately to inform them directly should they be advised to shield.

Whatever the current local COVID alert levels are, as the BMA have made clear, GP practices remain open and whilst remote consultations should be the main way in which patient care is delivered, when it is clinically necessary to see vulnerable patients face to face they would normally expect them to attend the surgery with good infection control arrangements in place.

Read more in our [updated guidance for patient at high risk](#)

Complaints (KO41b form) data collection for 2019/20

Following the BMA lobbying for a reduction in bureaucracy impacting practices, and particularly in light of the current pressures that general practice face in responding to COVID-19, NHS Digital have confirmed that the annual complaints (KO41b form) data collection relating to 2019/20 will not be collected as usual. Practices are instead encouraged to continue to use the information collected locally for local service improvement purposes. Read more [here](#)

Covid Virtual ward

Wessex LMC recently held a webinar on Virtual Wards – with Karen Krikham (GP and NHSE/I primary care advisor) and Matt Inada-Kim (Consultant and national lead for sepsis) as speakers, both part of a group developing national proposals. View the webinar [here](#). It is also available as [audio podcast](#).

BMA COVID-19 Guidance

Read BMA [COVID-19 toolkit for GPs and practices](#), to help answer questions on a large range of topics 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](#)
- [Risk assessments](#)

Kind regards
Kent Local Medical Committee