



14th December 2020

Dear Colleague

Please see below our latest updates for your information:

Message from Richard Vautrey, Chair of the BMA re COVID-19 vaccination programme (CVP) implementation

“After such a terrible year, it is really good news to see the COVID-19 vaccination programme up and running. This is a massive achievement and I wish to thank all those involved in getting to this stage, not least the many hundreds of practices working through over 200 designated wave 1 practice group sites that start vaccinating their patients next week. They will be rapidly followed by wave 2 and 3 in the coming days enabling thousands of our most vulnerable patients to begin to be protected from this dreadful infection.

NHSE/I has [written to the initial sites](#) to set out the requirements, and have said they will be given full support to mobilise within the timescale. They have also outlined all the equipment that will be provided free to designated sites, in addition to the £20m provided to cover other additional costs. This followed the publication of an updated version of the [Enhanced Service Specification](#) for the delivery of the CVP, to include modifications following discussion with MHRA and to ensure patients from non-participating practices can be provided vaccinations. There will be further updates to reflect the new requirement by MHRA for a 15 minute observation period following giving the vaccine. We would expect CCGs to work with and support practice groups should there be a need to review the premises arrangements to accommodate this new requirement.

NHSE/I has published a [collaborative agreement](#) for the use by practice groups, which our legal team has reviewed further. We are liaising with NHSE/I to make amendments to the data sharing and indemnity sections of this agreement so that they provide more security for practices, and it will therefore be re-published very shortly. It remains a template that practices could adapt further if they wanted to, but we hope that following our legal review this will not be necessary. In addition, they have also produced a document outlining the [legal mechanism for the administration of COVID-19 vaccines](#) as it was necessary for the hospital sites to use a Patient Specific Direction rather than a Patient Group Direction to support the initial vaccination process. However, NHSE/PHE have now issued a [PGD](#) which practice groups can use, and therefore will not need to use the PSD. There are also accompanying [letters](#) that responds to many of the issues that have been raised, giving details of the [wave 1 mobilisation](#) of vaccinations. A [SOP for the management of COVID-19 vaccination clinical incidents](#) has also been published. Access all details [here](#).

In order for vaccinations to be delivered promptly and as matter of priority, practices will need to re-prioritise other work and NHSE/I have now been clear that they can offer an urgent-only service whilst vaccinating practice teams are involved in the programme.

The CVP is a voluntary scheme. Whilst it's very positive that so many practices have stepped up to take part in such a short period of time, when so much of the programme was in development and subject to change, no practice should be pressured in to doing this, nor should any commissioner be placing unreasonable pressure on them to do so. In addition, should practices feel that new requirement for 15 minute post-vaccination observation makes their model of working no longer possible, they should firstly discuss this with their CCG to see what alternative arrangements could be made, but ultimately they could withdraw from the programme if they wished, providing vaccine has not already been dispatched to their site. NHSE/I will only send vaccine to sites that are ready and able to use it.”

COVID-19 vaccination programme precautionary advice

As noted above, the MHRA has produced urgent precautionary advice for healthcare professionals following two case reports of anaphylactoid reactions associated with administration of Pfizer BioNtech COVID-19 vaccine:

- Any person with a history of a significant allergic reaction to a vaccine, medicine or food (such as previous history of anaphylactoid reaction or those who have been advised to carry an adrenaline autoinjector) should not receive the Pfizer BioNtech vaccine.
- Vaccine recipients should be monitored for 15 minutes after vaccination, with a longer observation period when indicated after clinical assessment.

The new requirement to monitor patients for 15 minutes will have an impact on primary care plans for the clinics and if this raises issues relating to premises capacity and patient flow practice groups should discuss this with their CCG and seek their support to resolve this.

Kent LMC will also be discussing this issue with the CCG and please feel free to contact us if you are experiencing any particular issues with the programme.

University of Oxford / AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine trial data

The [data from Phase III of the University of Oxford / AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine trial](#) has been published which provides further good news in that it suggests that this vaccine could prevent asymptomatic disease, and we look forward to the trial to be completed. The data is promising, particularly as we know that this vaccine can be stored at fridge temperature and can be more easily be delivered in primary care. Read the Wellcome Trust statement [here](#).

2019/20 annual allowance charge compensation scheme (England and Wales)

As reported last week, following significant pressure by the BMA, NHS England and NHS Wales introduced the annual allowance repayment scheme last year, which guarantees that any annual allowance tax charge in 2019/20 for eligible clinicians will be compensated for at the time of retirement.

If an eligible clinician who is a member of the NHS England and Wales pension scheme incurs an annual allowance tax charge, they **must elect to pay this via scheme pays**. The formal scheme pays deadline is 31 July 2021, however, members are encouraged to complete the forms as soon as possible, preferably by 31 December 2020 (to minimise any interest applicable).

As the deadline is fast approaching, and to help members, the BMA has produced a [template letter](#), to be submitted alongside the [scheme pays election form](#). You will then need to complete the [2019/20 Annual Allowance Charge Compensation Policy Form](#). Find more information on how to apply, as well as resources for employers, FAQs and infographics, on the [NHSE/I website](#).

Read more in this [update from the BMA's Pensions Committee](#) and the [guidance on annual allowance repayment scheme on the BMA website](#).

Ethnicity data (England)

The GMS regulation (England) amendments for recording of ethnicity information have been laid and will come into force from *1 January 2021*. This follows the significant impact COVID-19 has had on BAME people and the need to have better quality data to support the most effective healthcare planning.

This amendment places a requirement on practices to record ethnicity data provided by a patient when a practice ask for this. Read the Statutory Instrument and the Explanatory Memorandum [here](#).

Christmas parties and gifts – accountancy advice

Accountancy advice from James Gransby, Partner at RSM Accountants, Vice Chair AIMS

With the traditional style Christmas party unlikely to be going ahead this year, what can practices do as an alternative? [RSM accountants](#) advises the following for practices:

Tax efficient options can be gifts or a remote get-together; normally there would be a £150 allowance per employee per year which would cover the cost of a Christmas party, but this isn't transferable into other options such as gift vouchers where the limit is £50 per person.

Gift vouchers - When giving vouchers up to £50 you are keeping within the HMRC 'Trivial Benefits' exemption limits. One of the conditions of this is that the gift must not be a reward for work or performance, therefore if the gift card comes with a message of "thank you for all your work over this challenging time" then HMRC could look to tax it, but a simple "season's greetings" will avoid this issue (the same advice applies for other times of celebration such as Diwali, or in Easter). Read more in the HMRC tax guidance on [trivial benefits](#)

Reward for service - If you want to give over and above a £50 voucher or if you do want to reward for service or performance then this should go through the payroll in the normal way as overtime or a bonus would do, and then be subject to PAYE in the hands of the staff member.

Remote parties - If you are planning a remote Christmas party then there is some good news, as HMRC has confirmed that the £150 per head exemption still applies. (There had been some concern that a virtual event would not meet the definition of an annual event and that food and drink sent to employees to consume during the party might be considered a separate gift which would therefore not be covered by the exemption). Note that this would be subject to the usual conditions:

- the event is available to all employees (there may be separate parties for different departments or branch surgeries)
- a record is taken of attendees, to ensure that those receiving food presents are at the party
- if costs exceed £150 per head the full cost of the party, not the excess cost, is taxable on the employee.

For further advice please contact your practice accountant.

Medical Aid Films community language COVID-19 resources

Medical Aid Films, supported by BMA Giving, have produced community language versions of their [informative COVID-19 animation](#) 'Getting the help you need', which offers important patient information on medical rights, where and how to access services, as well as self-care strategies. The animations are available in English, Punjabi, Urdu and Arabic.

This resource is intended to aid doctors and health care professionals to better support their patient communities who may be lacking access to COVID-19 information and messaging in their own language. Additional languages versions will be available from next month.

In addition, the charity is inviting healthcare workers fluent in Punjabi, Urdu and Arabic to take part in an online screening and Q&A session that will review the animation and highlight information needs and preferences around COVID-19 for non-English speaking communities. If you are interested in this opportunity, Medical Aid Films are able to cover small project expenses. Contact meghan@medicalaidfilms.org for more information or fill out the [online feedback survey](#).

EU Exit update – medicines supply continuity letter (England)

The NHSE/I has published a [letter](#) from Dr Keith Ridge, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England, with an update on EU Exit on 31 December 2020, specifically on medicines supply continuity. The letter sets out that:

The DHSC guidance is that it is not necessary for local providers, whether in hospitals or primary care, to stockpile medicines or for clinicians to write longer prescriptions for patients. Unnecessary stockpiling puts more pressure on the supply chain and can risk additional pressure on the availability of medicines in other parts of the country. Prescribers and pharmacists should explain to patients that they should continue to order their prescriptions as normal.

Investment and Impact Fund 2020/21 – reminder to sign up to PCN CQRS service (England)

The Investment and Impact Fund represents a significant source of income for PCNs and to calculate this, NHSE/I measures PCN performance against indicators defined in the [2020/21 Network Contract DES](#), by using data extracted from practice systems via the [Calculating Quality Reporting Service](#).

In order for practices to record their performance against these indicators, commissioners must have offered them the PCN service on CQRS. If they do not, PCNs containing these practices risk not receiving IIF funding this year, *so if your practice is not signed up to this service, please contact your CCG as soon as possible to ensure that it is offered.*

More information can be found on [NHS Digital's website](#) and for any questions about the service, please contact england.gpcontracts@nhs.net.

Partnership Agreement webinar – BMA Law

BMA Law are holding a free webinar on Partnership Agreements on Tuesday 15 December at 1pm. The webinar will cover all aspects of Partnership Agreements - why you need a partnership agreement, how often you should update it, and the common pitfalls to avoid. Register [here](#)

Useful links for Patients:

Below is a collection of patient links that practices may find helpful.

Asthma UK: Advice on inhaler technique <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/>
Asthma UK: What to do in an asthma attack <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/asthma-attacks/>
GOV UK : COVID-19 Stay-at-home guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>
GOV UK: Get a COVID-19 test <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>
Healthier Together: Information for under 18s <https://what0-18.nhs.uk/professionals/gp-primary-care-staff>
NHS UK: Coronavirus info & advice <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
NHS UK: Get an isolation note <https://111.nhs.uk/isolation-note/>
NHS UK : Mental health support with COVID-19 https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/ev_ery-mind-matters/
NHS UK: Your COVID-19 recovery guide <https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/>
NHS Volunteer Responders: Services <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/services>
RCOG UK: Coronavirus infection & pregnancy <https://www.rcog.org.uk/en/guidelines-research-services/guidelines/coronavirus-pregnancy/covid-19-virus-infection-and-pregnancy/>
RCOT UK: Managing post-viral fatigue after Covid-19 <https://www.rcot.co.uk/recovering-covid-19-post-viral-fatigue-and-conserving-energy>

COVID-19 guidance

Read the BMA's [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](#)

We have also updated our website to include a range of information that will support your practice during the pandemic:

- [Covid 19 Resources](#)
- [GP and GP staff wellbeing](#)

Kind regards
Kent Local Medical Committee