



28th June 2021

Dear Colleague

Please see below our latest updates for your information:

Kent and Medway Post COVID Assessment Service (PCAS) webinars

The CCG are running webinars to help practice staff understand the service, discuss the referral process and to answer questions about how PCAS is operating. The webinars will be held on:

- Tuesday 29 June at 6.30pm - 7.30pm
- Friday 2 July at 1pm - 2pm.
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To access these webinars, please log on five minutes beforehand at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8906047534> with passcode: France123.

Making an Application for a Premises Improvement Grant - Do's and Don'ts (Webinar)

Join the LMC and Invicta Surveyors' Rosemary Jones for a lunchtime webinar on Making an Application for a Premises Improvement Grant – Dos and Don'ts

CCGs have recently announced release of capital funding to carry out premises improvements, with more to follow during the year. This is a great opportunity to carry out premises improvements to help with compliance matters and to ensure you receive the correct funding for them. Attending this webinar will take you through the information needed and the process involved in making a “right first time” application. Some practical examples of where things can go wrong as well as examples of successes. Book your place [here](#).

Support after Suicide Briefing Sessions

Listening Ear (Merseyside) has been commissioned by Kent & Medway to deliver support to those bereaved by suicide in the area through a service called Amparo. They are hosting a series of free Zoom briefings about Amparo. They have been extremely popular and are now taking bookings for September, with additional dates to be released shortly. They are designed for professionals who may encounter clients who have been affected by suicide. Details of the September dates can be found here: <https://listening-ear.co.uk/amparo-briefings-reach-600-people/>. In addition, there are two introductory sessions specifically for Kent and Medway, and these can be booked on the links below: Introducing Amparo Kent & Medway Mon, 28 Jun 2021 14:30 - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158707391079> Fri, 2 Jul 2021 14:30 - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/158707842429>

Guidance: Population screening, reducing inequalities for people with a learning disability, autism or both

Please see below the link to a new comprehensive guide to supporting people with learning disabilities and/or autism in accessing population screening programmes. It outlines the legal duty providers have in the sharing of information and the delivery of their service to this

population group. Furthermore, it gives information to support making reasonable adjustments, supporting informed choice and links to further sources of information.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/population-screening-supporting-people-with-learning-disabilities/population-screening-reducing-inequalities-for-people-with-a-learning-disability-autism-or-both?fbclid=IwAR0fLgbSsc9Yu_VYhpAwKG1ES5B_yM52tu2jUgatD-gbAhYIHdH13wRvqW8

If you would like to discuss your plans for implementing any aspect of this guidance with us please email phst@nhs.net

New PCSE pay and pension system update (England)

The BMA have grown increasingly concerned about the volume of issues being raised about the new online portal for pay and pensions. Issues are wide-ranging and involve both historical migrated data and current data. BMA are aware of some of this data being incorrect, some of it being missing and still more just being unclear to users. It is affecting GPs' pension data in many instances, locum and solo performers being particularly affected, and there have also been early issues with some payment runs to practices. PCSE has assured the BMA that all of this is being addressed urgently but there is a need to see more evidence that this is happening.

The BMA, along with the Institute of General Practice Management, have [written to the Chief Commercial Officer of NHS England](#) to raise concerns and demand urgent action to ensure that GPs and practices are able to use the system as intended as we approach a critical time for many users.

GP engagement with the new system remains low according to the data the BMA have seen, so they would urge GPs to log in and check their records as a priority and to [inform PCSE](#) of any errors. They would also ask all system users to make use of [PCSE's guidance materials](#). They understand that a significant number of calls and emails to PCSE are being answered with information from the guidance.

PCSE have issued a statement on their website which you can read [here](#).

Meetings with Health Minister, Jo Churchill (England)

The BMA met with health minister, Jo Churchill, last week to follow up the points raised in their previous meeting with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and following his recent [letter](#), where they called on the Minister to bring an end to SOPs, and the NHSE/I approach to overly prescriptive management of general practice. They also asked for improved direct messaging to patients and pushed for the PCN service specifications planned for October to be delayed until April 2022 at the earliest in order to reduce additional workload burden for practices during the autumn and winter when we are likely to be facing a rise in respiratory illness alongside the need to focus on flu/COVID-19 vaccinations and support patients impacted by the on-going NHS care backlog.

They raised the need to maximise ARRS recruitment this year, to maintain the options for flexible working and the issue of practice premises, including the need for more space, not least for PCN recruited staff to work from. They also discussed the need for the government to do more to inform the public about the pressures the whole NHS was under and for them to encourage people not to take out their frustration on frontline staff, particularly by abusing reception staff. Following a joint GPC England/DDA (Dispensing Doctors Association) letter to Jo Churchill MP about a range of dispensing issues, Dr Richard Vautrey joined Dr Richard West, the chair of the DDA, for a meeting with the health minister to discuss how these issues could be addressed. We highlighted the need to enable dispensing practices to use the electronic prescribing system, to address the issues relating to rurality that adversely impact many dispensing practices and called for improvements to the arrangements for drug reimbursement.

Meeting with the Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment, Nadhim Zahawi (England)

Dr Richard Vautrey met with Vaccines Minister, Nadhim Zahawi last week to discuss the COVID booster vaccine and the flu vaccine preparations. The Minister opened the meeting by thanking GPs for their work and recognising the success of the COVID vaccine programme. He outlined that work is underway to roll out a booster campaign, but that questions remain and the final decision will be made by the JCVI. Operational guidance will be coming out shortly to enable practices to opt in to phase 3 of the programme.

Dr Vautrey outlined the need to base the programme as much as practically possible on the historically successful annual local delivery of flu vaccination, which is effectively “business as usual” for practices and pharmacies. They also discussed the need to support practices and not to add additional burdens during what is likely to be a challenging winter, and called for IT improvements, including how the NHS app could be used to record wider vaccine provision to enable patients to be empowered to check their own vaccine history.

Exemptions for care workers

Following a public consultation, it was recently announced by the Government that, from October, **people working in care homes will need to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19**. This will impact those who visit care homes, including GPs and community teams. The government has said that a small number of people would be exempt and whilst they have indicated that individuals may be directed to their GP to provide evidence for their exemption, the BMA do not believe this should be the approach.

They believe a better approach would be for local authorities to receive support in commissioning a dedicated service to assess exemption requests that does not require GP involvement, as is the case in many areas for disabled parking badge and that the Government should support local authorities with this. This would lead to a consistent approach as well as reducing a further workload burden for practices. Should the government continue to suggest GP practices should do this, the BMA believe this will require practices to refer to a secondary care service to do the necessary assessment as many of these patients will be receiving specialist care.

The government also plans to launch a further public consultation on whether or not to extend this to include all those employed in health and care settings. Read the **BMA's response** to the announcement on a consultation on mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for healthcare workers.

COVID-19 vaccination programme

Vaccine cohorts

All adults aged 18 and over (cohort 12) in England are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccines and will be receiving texts inviting them to book a vaccination via the national booking service, at an NHS vaccination centre, pharmacy or GP vaccination site. This weekend many sites were offering the opportunity to attend a centre without an appointment for vaccination.

Vaccine supply

While the limited supplies of the Moderna vaccine have always been directed to mass vaccination sites, in recent weeks some areas have reported seeing a significant reduction in the volume of Pfizer vaccine available and supplies are not meeting demand from those still to be vaccinated. This means some people waiting weeks for their first-dose appointment at a time when we need as many as possible to be protected as quickly as possible.

While the Government insists that the UK is on track to offer a first dose to all adults by its own 19 July deadline, we need honesty and transparency about what supplies are available nationally. This is especially urgent given the need to stem the spread of the Delta variant by vaccinating as many people as quickly as possible.

FAQs to support general practice and students in higher education institutions

NHSE/I has published [FAQs to support general practice and higher education institutions](#), which advises that although in general, patients should return to the place they had their first dose to have their second dose, students in higher education are able to receive their second dose in a different location to their first dose if they have relocated. The National Booking Service has an option to book or re-arrange the second vaccination appointment at a different location to the first appointment.

The guidance also advises on what the options are for student who had their first dose in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, but is in England at the time of their second dose. If a person has received a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine overseas with a vaccine that is also available in the UK, they should receive the same vaccine for their second dose. If the vaccine they received for their first dose is not available in the UK, the [most similar alternative](#) should be offered.

Vaccine data

[75.5 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines](#) have now been delivered in the UK, and nearly 32 million have also received their second dose. The weekly BMA summary of COVID-19 data is attached.

Department of Health and Social Care draft data strategy

The Department of Health and Social Care has published their [draft data strategy](#) this week, setting out their plans to harness the potential of data in health and care.

When used effectively, ethically and legally, data can play a pivotal role in improving the health of the population, whether this is for planning, research or for direct patient care. Everyone has a right to know what is happening with their healthcare data, however, as we have seen in recent weeks with the pausing of the GDPR roll-out what happens when these issues are not communicated properly, and patients are not given an opportunity to take part in such important discussions.

Therefore, the Government and NHSX must follow through with commitments to engage fully with both the public and the profession, addressing any concerns they may have about this strategy and specifically proposals around sharing data more widely than for direct care.

The BMA will be considering the draft strategy in detail and responding formally on behalf of our members and their patients in due course. Read our full statement in response by Farah Jameel, GPC England Executive team IT lead, [here](#)

Delay in roll-out of patient data sharing programme (GDPR)

Following extensive lobbying by the BMA and RCGP, Government announced a delay to the rollout of GDPR, which amounts to two months with full rollout now expected on 1 September rather than 1 July.

BMA is now engaged in discussions with NHS Digital and other stakeholders to ensure no additional burden is placed on GPs to facilitate the implementation of this programme, and have been lobbying MPs on this issue.

In view of the extension to date of the first extraction, the BMA will keep you informed on all next steps that practices will need to take as we approach this deadline. In the interim, you may wish to consider as a practice whether to proactively contact patients to inform them of what is changing. Read the full BMA statement about the announcement to delay [here](#)

If patients register a Type 1 Opt-out, practices must process this in a timely fashion. Codes for opt-out can be found [here](#) and are copied below for ease

Opt-out - Dissent code

9Nu0 (827241000000103 |Dissent from secondary use of general practitioner patient identifiable data (finding))

Opt-in - Dissent withdrawal code

9Nu1 (827261000000102 |Dissent withdrawn for secondary use of general practitioner patient identifiable data (finding))

Further information, including a transparency notice, is available [here](#)

Cervical screening adverse incident (Scotland and England)

In December 2020, a national health service board in Scotland conducted its annual invasive cervical cancers audit and discovered that a very small number of women had developed cervical cancer after being wrongly excluded from the screening programme following a hysterectomy that was carried out more than 20 years ago. The Scottish Government have apologised for this [cervical screening incident in Scotland](#), but it is now clear that a small number of those affected now live in England (currently believed to be 19 individuals).

NHSE/I will be contacting the respective practices for those patients today (via regional screening leads) to ask them to notify the patients identified that they're impacted by the incident and provide advice on the appropriate next steps e.g. follow up appointment in colposcopy. They'll be providing supporting materials to those practices, including a patient letter, based on the NHS Scotland response.

Enhanced shared parental leave system for salaried GPs (UK)

The new [enhanced shared parental leave](#) system for salaried GPs has been launched across the UK and will allow for up to 50 weeks of the 52 weeks maternity leave to be shared between the parents. Eligible parents are also able to share up to 37 weeks of statutory shared parental pay (equivalent of statutory maternity pay). The ESPL system will be offered by employers at GMS and some PMS practices. Employees may request for this new form of leave to be included in their contracts, in line with provisions for junior doctors and agenda for change staff. This change to a more flexible form of leave supports the BMA's commitment to address the gender pay gap. [Find out more about enhanced shared parental leave entitlements](#) and read the updated [Salaried GPs handbook](#)

Contact your MP about punitive pension tax

The BMA will begin its campaign addressing the taxation issues within the NHS Pension Scheme with a Parliamentary briefing event on 1 July. They are looking to gather support and attendance from MPs from all parties and nations to address this vital issue. BMA members are encouraged to support this event by [tweeting their MP](#) to highlight the event directly to them. Please join us and invite your MP along to the event by using our [template form](#)

Do you hold a GP sponsorship licence?

If so, the BMA are keen to hear from you. Whether you already hold a sponsorship licence or are considering getting one to employ non-UK nationals, they really want to know how you found the application process and any barriers that you faced.

The Home Office introduced a new sponsorship system last October, in preparation for the introduction of the new immigration system which came into force in January 2021. The new system is designed to alleviate many of the complexities of the old system and it is hoped the new application process will support employers to apply for a sponsorship licence with relative ease. As detailed in the updated [guidance](#), employers can now apply [online](#).

The Home Office wish to survey small businesses, including GP practices to get a sense as to any barriers in the system. If you have any insights into the sponsorship process that you wish to

share, please contact Caroline Strickland, Senior Policy Advisor in BMA's International Affairs on the following email CStrickland@bma.org.uk

RCGP report on relationship-based care

The RCGP has published a new report '[The power of relationships: what is relationship-based care and why is it important?](#)', which sets out what is meant by relationship-based care – “*care in which the processes and outcomes of care are enhanced by a high quality relationship between doctor and patient*” - what the evidence tells us about its benefits for patients, GPs and the wider healthcare system, and why relationship-based care needs to be reinvigorated.

Deadline for THE EU SETTLEMENT Scheme – 30 June

The deadline for applications to be made to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) is 30 June 2021. If you are a doctor currently in the UK and arrived before the 31 December 2020, you must apply by 30 June. It is free of charge, and in applying and being granted pre-settled or settled status, you will have secured your rights to continue living and working in the UK.

An application must also be made for every eligible child within your family. If you and your family members have lived in the UK for many years or have a permanent residence document or EEA Biometric Residence Card (BRC), you still need to apply to the EUSS (or apply for British citizenship) to secure your existing rights in the UK. [Apply on GOV.UK](#) and check your immigration status [here](#).

BMA COVID-19 guidance

Read the BMA [COVID-19 toolkit for GPs and practices](#), which provides comprehensive guidance for practices to manage contractual issues and service provision during the coronavirus pandemic.

You can access all the BMA guidance on COVID-19, including ethical guidance, [here](#)

GPC UK and GPC England committee pages

Read more about the work and priorities of [GPCUK](#) and [GPC England](#) in the newly updated committee pages, which also includes surveys undertaken, membership of the committee, meeting dates and a link to the [GP practices page](#). You can also follow them on [twitter](#)

Kind regards
Kent Local Medical Committee