



27th September 2021

Dear Colleague

Please see below our latest updates for your information:

Kent & Medway Leadership Programme

Please click [HERE](#) to find out about the opportunities within the Kent & Medway Primary Care ICS Transformation programme. It is open to everyone working in Kent & Medway Primary care as their main job, clinical to non-clinical, GP locums to CDs and all allied health professionals in between with a desire to make a difference!

Tackling abuse and meeting with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care - message from Richard Vautrey

In recent weeks, GPs and their practice teams have been subjected to a systematic and cruel smear campaign by sections of the media, this has directly resulted in rising incidences of abuse and aggression being experienced by general practice. This has left many in the profession feeling totally demoralised and under siege.

We want to be clear - general practice has continued to see patients throughout the pandemic, in July alone 27 million appointments were delivered by general practice, the majority of which were face-to-face. This is testament to the true integrity, grit and determination of GPs and their practice teams. We will not let false narratives go unchallenged.

Following [a horrific act of aggression against a practice](#) last Friday, we [wrote to Sajid Javid](#) earlier this week demanding an urgent meeting and summit to discuss the unacceptable level of abuse being levelled against GPs and their staff, and have called for a comprehensive national violence reduction strategy, and as a result of our pressure, I met with him face to face yesterday.

It was a robust and frank meeting in which I highlighted the serious damage to morale the current anti-GP rhetoric was having on the whole profession, the fear that many on the GP frontline had and that this must stop. I raised the need for urgent action to challenge abuse against GPs and their staff, and support for the whole general practice workforce and called for legislative change to better protect the workforce. I stressed the need for Government to explain to the public why healthcare workers are still working within the constraints of infection, protection and control measures, that large numbers of face-to-face consultations were taking place every day and that clinicians would always see their patients when it was necessary to do so. We also discussed the value of telephone consultations as part of a mix of access offers - something that is increasingly appreciated by many patients who now receive more timely appointments as a result but whose voices are not being heard in the toxicity of media reporting.

I also raised the essential need longer-term premises development so we have the space to offer access to the increasing multidisciplinary team that is developing in many practices, in addition to being a safer place for patients with the on-going pandemic. I focused on the need to address the unsustainable workload pressures, the impact of the care backlog and secondary care work

transfer to general practice and urged him to trust practices to deliver services to patients with long-term conditions without the rigidity, bureaucracy and burden of QOF or unnecessary CQC inspections. We also called for far more action to enable practices to expand their workforce and for government to deliver on their own commitment of 6000 more GPs. But most importantly I focussed on the need to acknowledge, thank and value the GP workforce who have gone above and beyond over the course of the pandemic from being pivotal in delivering the COVID vaccination program to continuing to keep seeing patients throughout the course of the pandemic.

We now demand that the Government take immediate action to tackle the abuse against GPs and their practice staff, which is having a serious impact on the wellbeing and morale of the profession and provides both immediate and long term support to practices at this critical time. Read the BMA's [statement](#) following the meeting.

Read the BMA's [message to the profession](#), including resources for [practices how to remove violent patients from your practice list](#).

Kent LMC has also been working with the CCG to develop a pro-active media and comms campaign to highlight the hard work of practices and to counter the negative campaigning that in the media. We will shortly be sending a range of resources that practices can use, and we will also be trying to work with local MPs and media to create positive stories regarding general practice.

Dealing with abuse of practice staff on social media from patients

The BMA have developed guidance [how to protect yourself from online abuse](#) and the steps GP practices can take against patients who leave abusive comments on social media or websites. It outlines what to do first, how to report content to the provider and what criminal and civil actions are possible.

On top of what the BMA has been doing, [other GPs](#) are making it clear the pressures they're under.

NHS Confederation is also showing their support in their statement '[Standing with primary care](#)' where they 'stand unwaveringly in support of the vital contribution of our primary care members'. Following increasing instances of GPs being scapegoated by the media and rising instances of abuse against GPs and their staff, the BMA has produced a [template letter](#) you can use to write to your local MP to outline the current pressures being faced by GPs across the country.

Media intrusion

We are aware that with the intense national media vilification of General Practice some journalists are approaching local practices directly for comment. There is no obligation to respond to the media. If practices would like guidance about a specific situation they can reach the BMA media team at Media Office MediaOffice@bma.org.uk. We are also concerned that some publications will send photographers to practices looking for photos designed to support their narrative of primary care being hard to access. The Editor's Code of Conduct which guides the practice of press organisations in the UK says that journalists should identify themselves when asked to do so and *that no journalists should operate on healthcare property without permission*, this applies to photographers as well. So if practice staff see a possible photographer who is not welcome then the best advice is to ask them to identify themselves and then ask them to leave.

Support your surgery campaign

The BMA has been campaigning consistently and vociferously in defence of GPs and their staff over the summer with our [Support Your Surgery campaign](#) to get the backing of patients to make the changes to primary care that are so urgently needed and to help them [understand why](#)

[practices still need to work in the way they have been doing](#), primarily to protect them from infection.

Please continue to show your support by signing the [Support Your Surgery petition](#) and sharing it with colleagues, friends, and families. The petition is just one element of the campaign but is a way of putting pressure on the Government to properly support general practice.

We have produced a GP campaign factsheet that can be used to rebut the misinformation being published in the media and to proactively include in social media posts, letters to the local press or MPs. Please do all you can to help defend and support general practice at this critical time.

You can also get involved in the [#SupportYourSurgery social media discussion](#). Many GPs and patients are sharing their support for each other and practices across social media. This will help reach as many people with the campaign as possible.

GPC UK meeting update

GPC UK met yesterday in its first meeting of the new session and where new members were welcomed to the committee for the year ahead.

The main item of discussion was the recent shocking rise in cases of abuse and aggression being directed at GPs and practice teams, fuelled by false narratives put forward by sections of media. The committee discussed the actions urgently needed to tackle the abuse against GPs and their staff and to support them.

The committee discussed further campaigning planned by the BMA in defence of GPs and their practices following on from the [Support Your Surgery](#) campaign. Work on the actions that can be taken next both nationally and by individual practices is happening at pace over the coming weeks.

GPCUK also discussed the following key items:

- Updates from the four nations on ongoing work
- Update on COVID-19 pandemic and vaccinations from Dr Susan Hopkins, Public Health England, and Dr Jonathan Leach, Medical Director COVID-19 Vaccination at NHS England
- Health and Social Care Bill - report from David Wrigley, chair of the BMA health bill task group
- The role of General Practice in addressing climate change
- Health inequalities and an update on BMA work

The policy lead update and a summary of my oral report to the committee on items not otherwise on our agenda are attached.

Support for GPs

We were pleased to have some recognition from the [Deputy Prime Minister, Dominic Raab, who thanked GPs](#) in answer to a question by Robert Langan MP to get GPs to see patients face-to-face. Mr Langan said GPs have done a brilliant job and are working long hours in challenging circumstance, but many constituents have raised concerns about seeing their GP face-to-face. Mr Raab paid tribute to GPs by saying "I join him in thanking GPs for the heroic job they have done in seeing us through the pandemic" and also said appointments have returned to pre pandemic levels.

COVID vaccinations

Phase 3 and booster vaccinations (England)

The [roll out of the COVID booster vaccination](#) programme has started this week, for the eligible cohorts (aged 50 and over, health and social care workers, and those [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) aged 16 and over).

Those who have had their second vaccine at least six months ago are eligible, and in line with JCVI advice, people should receive either one dose of the Pfizer vaccine or half a dose of the Moderna vaccine, which means for some people their booster dose may be different from the vaccines they had for their first and second dose. People could also be offered a booster dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine if they cannot have the Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna vaccine. Updated [Patient Group Directions and national protocols](#) for use in England for Pfizer BioNTech Covid-19 Vaccine BNT162b2 and Comirnaty have been published.

End of the shielding programme and closure of the Shielded Patient List (SPL)

The BMA have updated our [webpage on shielding](#) following the [Government announcement](#) that the shielding programme has now ended and patients will no longer be advised to shield.

Pension deductions by PCSE

Around 2,000 practices did not have pension deductions taken for one or more GPs from June through August. PCSE advise that the majority will have the deductions in total taken from payments to practices [during this month's payment runs](#). The deductions will be taken from the first payment processed by PCSE during the month, be that global sum or any other payment. Where the deduction total is greater than this payment the balance will be taken from the next payment during this month.

PCSE tell us that they have communicated this to affected practices but we are keen that this is understood. They have advised that practices will also receive a separate statement with details of the pensions deductions being taken and that it will be important that practices compare both statements to ensure they have the full view of payments in vs the deductions.

Kind regards
Kent Local Medical Committee