

FAO:  
GP practices  
Primary Care Networks  
Regional Directors of Commissioning  
Regional Heads of Primary Care  
CCG Clinical Leads and Accountable Officers

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## **PRIMARY CARE NETWORKS: REVISED NETWORK CONTRACT DIRECTED ENHANCED SERVICE FOR 2020/21**

### **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

1. Following the agreement and publication of the [update to the GP contract agreement 2020/21-2023/24](#) in February 2020, NHS England and NHS Improvement has today published the Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service (DES) for 2020/21 alongside associated guidance. The DES and guidance have been agreed with GPC England, and put into contractual form the agreements reached in February.
2. We recognise that the rapidly increasing COVID-19 pandemic is placing different pressures on general practice, and we are very grateful to all colleagues for the work they are doing to respond swiftly and professionally. For at least the next six months, and potentially beyond, the response to COVID-19 will be the priority for practices. The key principle is that we free up general practice capacity to prioritise workload to both prepare for and manage the COVID-19 outbreak. In light of this, Nikki Kanani and Ed Waller's letter of 19 March sets out a number of activities practices and PCNs may suspend or postpone in order to free up capacity.
3. This note provides more detail about the changes to the Network Contract DES for 2020/21 which we have agreed with GPC England to support practices and Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to enhance their capacity and ability to respond to the outbreak. We have done so because PCNs will play a vital role in the response to COVID-19: providing a structure to support general practice resilience, a mechanism to secure additional capacity, and a framework to deliver some of the urgent responses needed to manage the outbreak.
4. These measures will be kept under review over the coming weeks and months, and are being supplemented by other action and funding – relating to the GP

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contract and beyond – to support and sustain general practice during the COVID-19 situation. Further information will be provided by NHS England and NHS Improvement shortly.

5. In summary, the specific changes to the Network Contract DES for 2020/21 are as follows:

- We have postponed the implementation date for the Structured Medication Review service requirements until 1 October. This date will be kept under review. Networks should make every possible effort to begin work on the Early Cancer Diagnosis specification as planned unless work to support the COVID-19 response intervenes, and the contractual start date for this work is 1 October in recognition of this possibility. The Enhanced Health in Care Homes requirements remain in place given the vital importance of organizing and delivering a coordinated service to care home residents, many of whom will be at very high risk of a severe negative impact (directly or indirectly) from COVID-19. In the current circumstances, we expect digital technology to play an important role in supporting the delivery of the Enhanced Health in Care Homes service remotely where it is clinically appropriate to do so.
- We have postponed the introduction of the Investment and Impact Fund (IIF) for at least six months. We will recycle £16.25m of funding previously earmarked for the IIF into a PCN support funding stream – which will be paid on the basis of a PCN's weighted population at 27p per weighted patient for the six month period to 31 September 2020. This equates to half the total IIF funding, except the previously anticipated payment for flu immunizations where activity was not expected to commence until September in any event. We will discuss the remaining IIF funding with GPC England later in the year as the impact of COVID-19 becomes clearer, and will communicate this in good time before 1 October. The anticipated data collection to inform the IIF will continue as planned (which will help us to understand the impact of COVID-19 on PCNs) and, where possible, we will look to report PCN performance against the previously anticipated IIF metrics via the PCN dashboard. However, PCN income for at least the first six months of the year will no longer be contingent on this performance.
- Given that supporting increases to general practice capacity is more important than ever, the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme will continue as planned: offering 100% reimbursement of actual salary and defined on-costs, up to the maximum amounts, for ten PCN roles. We have postponed the requirement for PCNs to submit their workforce plans for 2020/21 until the end of August, and to submit indicative plans for 2021/22 to 2023/24 until the end

of October, to ensure that PCNs can focus on their recruitment activity as a priority to build capacity.

6. We urge practices and commissioners to reconfirm their participation in the Network Contract DES at the earliest possible opportunity in the coming days, so that there is no interruption in PCN payments at this critical moment and so PCNs can focus on the response to COVID-19 and move forward as swiftly as possible with using the DES to build their capacity and support their resilience.
7. Thank you again for your responsiveness and commitment in the context of a very fast-moving situation.

**Primary Care Strategy and NHS Contracts Group**  
**NHS England and NHS Improvement**