

# Vote on the Primary Care Networks DES

Following a resolution of [LMC England conference in November 2020](#) we are holding a vote of the GP profession on the Primary Care Network Directed Enhanced Service (PCN DES). This paper contains some information on the vote, and where to learn more about the PCN DES.

## The PCN DES vote

### Why is the vote taking place?

At the [November 2020 conference of LMCs in England](#), a resolution was passed stating:

That conference notes that the GPC England has never secured a robust democratic mandate for the PCN DES and so again asks the GPC England to secure a firm mandate from the entire profession by means of ballot before negotiating any extension or changes to the PCN DES for the year 2021/2022.

The BMA is therefore undertaking a vote of GPs working in England to inform its continued negotiations on the PCN DES. Due to the potential impact upon the third year of the current five-year GP contract agreement the vote is being held in early January ahead of any further contractual negotiations on the PCN DES prior to April 2021 (pending any disruption to discussions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic).

### What information do I need?

Participants will be asked to respond to the question:

Prior to any further negotiations, extension or changes for 2021/22, do you give GPC England a mandate for the PCN Directed Enhanced Service?

In order to take part in the vote GPs will be required to provide their GMC number, contractual status, and the CCG area in which they are primarily based. This is to assist with validation of the results.

Completing the survey should take no more than a few minutes.

### Who can vote?

The vote is open to all GPs practicing in England. This includes partner, sessional and trainee GPs. Both BMA and non-BMA members are eligible to vote.

### When does the vote close?

Voting will close at 23:59 on Tuesday 19th January. Any votes submitted after this time will not be counted.

[To access the vote please follow the link on the BMA website](#)



## The PCN DES

The PCN DES was introduced as part of the 5-year contract framework agreed by GPC England and NHS England in 2019. It enables practices to form a Primary Care Network intended to both support member practices and deliver services to the local population. It provides additional resources to recruit a growing number of additional healthcare professionals and to invest in member practices.

The [five-year GP contract agreement](#) outlined how the DES would be developed, and how these planned changes are negotiated and agreed between GPC England and NHS England. As of April 2020, 99% of practices in England were involved in a PCN under the DES.

Full details of the PCN DES are available on the [BMA](#) and [NHS England](#) websites, however the below table sets out the top-line funding and service requirements for PCNs under the DES over the five year period.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
<b>Practice Payments</b>					
GMS Payments for PCN participation ( <i>million £s</i> )	105	105	105	105	105
<b>PCN Payments</b>					
£1.50 p/h PCN baseline ( <i>million £s</i> )	90	90	91	91	92
Clinical Director reimbursement (0.25 WTE) ( <i>million £s</i> )	31	42	43	44	45
Investment & Impact Fund available ( <i>million £s</i> )	–	41	150	225	300
PCN Enhanced Access funding ( <i>million £s</i> )	66	87	87 <sup>1</sup>	463	472
ARRS total available funding ( <i>million £s</i> )	110	430	746	1,027	1,412
PCN Care home premium ( <i>million £s</i> )	–	27	55	55	55
<b>Total PCN funding available (<i>million £s</i>)<sup>2</sup></b>	296	717	1,172	1,905	2,376
PCN Services added		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Extended Hours</li> <li>– Structured medication reviews</li> <li>– Enhanced health in care homes,</li> <li>– Supporting early cancer diagnosis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Personalised care<sup>1</sup></li> <li>– Anticipatory care</li> <li>– CVD<sup>1</sup></li> <li>– Tackling neighbourhood inequalities<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Extended access arrangements transfer from practices to PCNs<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	

1 Future years' service specifications and timing for introduction are still to be negotiated and agreed and may be subject to subsequent changes.

2 Introduction of the extended access arrangements to the PCN DES has been delayed until 2022. Full funding will therefore transfer into the DES in that year and enhanced access funding and requirements for 2021 will remain as for 2020.

3 Total PCN funding is based on maximum national entitlements.

## LMC conference policy on the PCN DES

The LMC England Conference has passed a number of resolutions relating to the PCN DES since the introduction of the DES in 2019, including at a special conference convened in March of last year to discuss a number of aspects of the PCN DES. All LMC conference policies regarding PCNs and the PCN DES can be found on the [BMA policy database](#).

Webcasts of the 2020 LMC England Conferences featuring debates about the PCN DES can be found at:

[LMC England special conference \(March 2020\)](#)

[LMC England conference \(November 2020\)](#)

## BMA Survey of Clinical Directors

The BMA recently undertook its second annual survey of PCN Clinical Directors, providing an insight on the PCN DES from those directly involved with the implementation of PCNs.

In this second annual survey, the BMA asked clinical directors about the challenges of delivering new services, operating under the testing circumstances of a global public health crisis and about the future of PCNs.

The results show that a year and a half after the creation of PCNs, Clinical Directors remain confident about what the networks can achieve over the next few years, provided appropriate financial and staffing resources are made available and they are given more time to deliver the requirements of the PCN DES.

The results of the survey can be found on the [BMA website](#)

## Further reading

[BMA PCN Handbook](#)

[The Kings Fund – PCNs Explained](#)

[NHS Confederation – PCNs: One year on](#)

## What happens next

If General Practice in England votes to continue involvement in the PCN DES, GPC England will continue to negotiate amendments for the remaining three years of the agreement, including service specifications, further workforce expansion, details of the Investment and Impact Fund and how the access scheme funding can be used. Amendments to the DES will be negotiated and implemented annually, following approval by GPC England, broadly in line with the timelines set out above, however these may change in order to support general practice in responding to the current pandemic. Practices will then have the opportunity to opt out within the annual window.

If General Practice in England decides against giving a mandate for the PCN DES, GPC England will be unable to continue discussions with NHS England regarding the DES. It will then be for NHSE England to decide how it wishes to proceed with arrangements for Primary Care Networks and the DES with its associated funding. This may include continuing to offer the DES to practices without GPC involvement in its continued development, transferring the DES requirements and associated funding to non-GP providers or removing some or all of the funding, including the PCN participation payment from practices, to be used elsewhere within the NHS. NHS England and government have consistently stated that PCN DES funding would not be made available for investment directly into global sum or other core elements of the practice contract.

It is therefore extremely important that participants consider the potential implications and consequences of a yes or no vote.