

LMC Update Email  
7 October 2021

Dear colleagues,

### **Survey on General Practice response to the current crisis**

We highlighted last week the current pressures in general practice, the media and government pressure to increase face-to-face consultations (despite current government guidance), and the increase in abuse and aggression toward GPs and practice staff. We also outlined our call on the government for support and protection for practices, and that we had held discussions with DHSC and NHSE/I.

While we await their firm proposals for a package of support, we want to know what you might be prepared to do if the package is not adequate.

We therefore sent an [email](#) on Wednesday asking for views on what GPs may do next and what they are prepared to do if there is no satisfactory response. We would be grateful if LMCs could also add to the push now to raise awareness in order to inform us of the strength of feeling within the profession and the measures that people might be prepared to take.

The survey includes a range of possible actions, and asks for any further actions you might consider that are not specifically asked. But this is not a ballot – it is important that we understand what action you would like to see and what action you would personally be willing to take.

If you haven't already filled the [survey](#) out - please do complete it if you haven't already and encourage your colleagues to do so as well.

The survey will close at 9am on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

### **Media**

[The Telegraph](#) reported on our survey asking for views on what GPs may do next and what they are prepared to do if there is no satisfactory response. A BMA spokesman said: "This is a critical time for the profession and it is important that members have their say on the current state of general practice. As the BMA frequently does, we are asking members for their views in this confidential survey for internal use while we continue to pursue positive engagement with NHS England and the Government. To be clear, this is not a ballot." [Pulse](#) also reported on the GP support package.

### **Support your surgery campaign**

In light of the current reports of a rise in GP abuse, both by some patients and media, the BMA continue to campaign in defence of GPs and their staff with our [Support Your Surgery campaign](#) to get the changes that are so urgently needed to support general practice teams.

We have now added a [zero-tolerance poster](#) to show that assault on practice staff, threatening or abusive behaviour or damage to property will not be tolerated.

Please also continue to show your support by signing the [Support Your Surgery petition](#) and sharing it with colleagues, friends, and families to put pressure on the Government to support general practice.



You can also get involved in the [#SupportYourSurgery social media discussion](#) by sharing your support across social media.

Please do all you can to help us defend and support general practice at this critical time.

We are asking members to use our [template letter](#) to write to your local MP to outline the current pressures being faced by GPs across the country.

We have also produced a [GP campaign factsheet](#) that can be used to rebut the misinformation in the media and to proactively include in social media posts, letters to the local press or MPs.

### **Letter of thanks to GPs in Scotland**

Earlier this week, Scottish GPC sent a [joint letter](#) with the Scottish Secretary for Health and Social Care, thanking GPs and recognising the difficult situation general practice are in:

“We absolutely reject this and condemn the increasing abuse that has been directed towards General Practice staff at what already is a difficult time for all health and social care workers. This is completely unacceptable.”

We would urge the UK Government to follow suit, to show their support for GPs in England.

### **GP Pay Transparency – NHSE/I Guidance**

The statutory instrument to amend the [GMS and PMS Regulations](#) affecting pay transparency has been laid before Parliament and will come into force on 1 October 2021. NHSE/I has now published guidance on how the regulation will work in practice, which is available [here](#).

We have made clear our significant concerns about the change compelling GPs to publicly declare NHS earnings above £150,000 especially in the current climate of threat, aggression and violence towards GPs. We believe this will be hugely damaging to morale among the profession and wholly counterproductive in terms of the ability to recruit and retain GPs. If this comes into force, it will have been imposed on the profession in breach of the original agreement and GPC England has not agreed to them being introduced in the absence of similar requirements across all providers of various primary care services.

This was reported by [GPonline](#), where GPC chair, Dr Richard Vautrey, said that pay transparency was agreed as part of the five-year contract deal 'on the clear understanding that GPs were not being singled out but that the government would also require other professions such as pharmacists and dentists to publish NHS earnings above a certain figure too'.

### **GP appointment data**

The [GP appointment data for August](#) has been published, showing that the total number of appointments delivered by general practice in August (25.5 million) remains higher than pre-pandemic levels (23.3 million in August 2019). The percentage of appointments delivered face-to-face has also risen to 57.7%, while the percentage of appointments delivered remotely (by telephone and video consultations) has fallen.

There are 1,904 fewer fully qualified full-time GPs than there were in 2015 despite government promises for 6,000 more. We are almost 8,000 GPs short. In the face of a huge backlog of care in hospitals as well as communities, these figures show that GPs are working harder than ever and dealing with even more patients than before the pandemic. Read our full [statement](#)

### **COVID-19 Vaccination PGD and national protocol (England)**

A revised Spikevax (formerly COVID-19 vaccine Moderna) PGD and national protocol for England have now been published – access [here](#)

### **Mitigating the effect of dispensing fees cut**

GPC England and the DDA asked NHS England to intervene to change the [fee scale](#). As calculated (correctly under an agreed formula) it took account of a 14% increase in volume triggered by the Covid pandemic and the first lockdown. This has caused the steep reduction in fees, which will be partially abated next April.

It is not just dispensing doctors who are affected by this fee cut. The scale also includes non-dispensing GPs who claim for Personally Administered items, including vaccines. There is on average a 35 pence per item decrease in dispensing fees.

The DDA have asked all of their members to write to their MPs as per their [template letter](#) and we encourage LMCs to share this with practices locally.

### **GPC UK election**

Voting for a representative for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire in the GPC UK election is now open.

To submit your vote please go to <https://elections.bma.org.uk/>

Voting will close on 25 October at midday.

You will need a BMA web account to access the election, if you do not have one you can register for access via the 'I want temporary access to the website' option available [here](#). Once you register for an account you will be given an ID number which you will need to share with the [elections team](#) to enable them to give you access.

If you have any issues please contact the elections team [elections@bma.org.uk](mailto:elections@bma.org.uk)

### **Media**

#### Abuse

There's a supportive article in the [Observer](#) around the abuse of GPs and practice staff.

[Pulse](#) reported on attacks in the media against GPs and their survey of GPs found that 50% think a return to pre-pandemic levels of face-to-face appointments is not possible, citing problems around infection control and increased demand throughout the pandemic. Dr Richard Vautrey, GPC chair, was quoted saying the recent meeting with the Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, was used to call for 'clear public backing for GPs' acknowledging 'the huge pressure they are under', urgent investment in primary care to 'remove unnecessary bureaucracy' and a Government commitment to work with the BMA on 'a national campaign to stop the abuse of NHS staff'.

[The Mail](#) reported that [MP Tim Farron](#) has written to the health secretary Sajid Javid challenging him to publicly support GPs and their staff in the wake of a 'worrying rise' in abuse from members of the public.

There have been a few more positive media coverage - an [article in Pulse](#) covered the negative articles recently directed at GPs, and [another](#) discussed the results of the media regulator ruling about the Telegraph columns from Alison Pearson. A [third Pulse article](#) covered the news

that Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab admitted that GP appointments 'have returned to pre-pandemic levels'.

The [Daily Mail](#) also reported that Sajid Javid said at a fringe event at the Conservative party conference that remote consultations had a 'role' in healthcare and that 'it continues because - I don't think this is surprising at all - that you find a lot of people that actually prefer it.'

#### Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland GPC chair Dr Alan Stout was interviewed in Friday's [Belfast Newsletter](#) about threats made against the Northern Ireland Health Minister.

Read the GP bulletin [here](#).

We would encourage LMCs to share this GPC update with GPs and practices.

Warm regards,

Mark

Mark Sanford-Wood  
Deputy Chair, GPC England