

LMC Update Email
20 November 2020

Dear colleagues

COVID-19 vaccination programme guidance (England)

We expect the specification for the COVID-19 vaccination programme to be published early next week, with more information for the many practices that have identified designated sites to use for the shared delivery of the programme. We have updated our newly published [guidance](#) about the CVP to explain the specific characteristics for two of the potential vaccines that are likely to be supplied in the UK and how practices can prepare for this. There is also a clarification that the latest information on the vaccines suggests that patients do not need to be observed following administration of the vaccine, but patients must not drive for 15 minutes after.

We have added a new section about how practices can utilise the resources and contractual flexibilities provided, including the use of PCN staff, extended access services and using QOF and local enhanced services income protection to enable workload prioritisation, and considering what is needed to practically deliver the vaccine and workforce issues.

I've also written a blog about GPs taking lead role in defeating the virus which you can read [here](#)

On Friday evening NHS England sent a letter outlining the wider COVID-19 vaccination deployment strategy and operational readiness. This is attached for information.

Flu vaccination programme

The Department of Health and Social Care in England have announced that all those over-50 can be included in the influenza programme from 1 December. Practices can order additional vaccines from the national store.

However, I have told DHSC directly of the concerns expressed by many practices about the lack of notice they were given of this extension to the flu campaign. It's not acceptable that practices are not given the necessary information in advance to be able to respond to their patients questions following an overnight press release.

We also released a press statement: "Dr Richard Vautrey, GPC chair at the BMA, said: "Patients have understandably been trying to book appointments following the announcement of the extension of the flu vaccination programme to include all 50-64 year-olds, but although practices knew a decision about this may be made this month, they were not given prior warning or provided with the necessary information in order to respond appropriately to their patients. GPs and their teams have in recent weeks successfully delivered millions of flu vaccinations to protect their patients, and far more than at this time last year. They will now be accessing the national stockpile to ensure this new group in their communities are also protected. Once they have enough supplies, practices will then contact patients to offer appointments either at their local surgery or a specific clinic. Eligible patients are strongly encouraged to take up this free offer, and to do this before the planned Covid-19 vaccination programme begins."

Following the impressive work of practices in recent weeks, flu vaccine uptake is higher in all vulnerable groups except pregnant women compared to this time last year. Provisional data published by PHE suggests 72.9% of those aged 65 and over, 45.0% of 2 year olds and 46.8% of 3 year olds have had their vaccine.



Speaking in the iNewspaper I [made clear](#) my dissatisfaction that practices were not given prior warning to the announcement about the extension of the flu vaccination programme or provided with any information in order to respond to requests from patients.

Media

I was interviewed on [BBC 5 Live](#) (1hr 11minutes) on Sunday morning speaking about the COVID vaccine. I was also interviewed by Sky News on Tuesday and LBC yesterday. Nigel Watson, chief executive of the Wessex Local Medical Committees, spoke on BBC Radio 4's [Today Programme](#) (1hr 31 minutes) this morning regarding plans for delivering the COVID vaccine.

The [Mirror](#) reported about the pressures that the COVID vaccine will bring, to which I commented: "We want to be able to provide immunisations – but we'll need to prioritise or it'll end in burnout. We need a reduction of bureaucracy and more support. GP practices have had a really tough time and can't be in two places at once." The [Daily Mail](#) reported on the challenges in delivering the COVID-19 vaccine and that 'We will need patients to understand that they should keep their appointments to ensure we can vaccinate as many people as possible and don't waste any of the vaccine'.

Chaand Nagpaul, chair of BMA Council has an [opinion piece](#) in today's i-Newspaper on the BMA's lock down exit strategy, which was also covered extensively on the BBC and other media this week.

Secretary of State praises GPs' pandemic response

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in England, led the No 10 briefing on Monday, and in response to a question from the media he said:

"What I'd say to every GP is how grateful I am for the work that you're doing, and your whole practice, everybody in primary care, both on the flu vaccine right now, which is being rolled out in record numbers – we've had a record uptake, we've had a 10 percentage point increase in the normal uptake of flu vaccines and that's really good news – and of course on the normal pressures of primary care. I'm really glad that a much bigger proportion of appointments in primary care are now done either over the phone or by video because that makes life easier for GPs and patients and there's been a really positive response to that. But that doesn't of course lift the whole burden, even though it makes access easier. I want to thank in advance GPs for all the work that I know that they're doing now and that there'll be even more of this winter to keep people safe."

GPC England meeting

GPC England held its first meeting of the session yesterday. I was pleased to congratulate Bruce Hughes on his re-election as the GPC UK Policy Lead for representation and Rachel Ali on her appointment as the committee's first ever gender diversity champion, which was one of the main proposals of GPC's Gender Task and Finish Group. I also thanked Rachel McMahon for her work as England LMC Conference Chair and for her contributions as a member of GPC England in that capacity. As chair of England conference she has set the bar very high for the incoming chair as Rachel's term of office will end after the England LMC conference which is due to be held virtually on Friday 27th November.

GPC England spent significant time considering the important work being undertaken in general practice in response to COVID 19. There was also an important discussion on the preparations for the delivery of the COVID vaccination in primary care. We also received update reports from the sessional GPs committee, GP trainees committee and GPC policy leads, and a summary is attached. These focused on a number of recent developments including pay and contracts, well-being, and education and training issues.

Other items on the agenda included, an update on issues relating to Digital First, considering the BMA council decision about submitting evidence to the DDRB, and an update on the DHSC/NHSEI bureaucracy review of general practice.

Letter to Secretary of State for Health on the need for CQC support for general practice

We have received a response from the CQC (Care Quality Commissioning) to our letter which urged the CQC to halt all non-essential inspections and practice monitoring to allow GPs and their teams, currently under immense pressure, to focus on the job at hand during the pandemic. Disappointingly, the CQC are not prepared to change their transitional regulatory approach, although it has confirmed that it will only inspect based on risk – i.e. where there are serious concerns around safety and quality of care.

We have now [written](#) to Matt Hancock to raise our concerns about this calling again for an immediate suspension of all CQC inspections and reviews of general practice, other than those required for serious safety issues. This should be for the duration of the pandemic and to enable practices to focus on other priorities, not least the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Highest ever GP trainee acceptances figures (England)

Health Education England (HEE) has published figures this week which show the highest ever number of GPs entering training in England with 3,793 posts accepted, exceeding their target of 3,250. GP trainee acceptances have increased year on year for the last 7 years and these figures represent a 40% increase on the figure of 2,700 recruits when HEE started its recruitment drive back in 2014. This is welcome news, and a sign that the changes that we have made is leading to more and more young doctors are being attracted to a career in general practice. Read more [here](#)

BMA report on exiting the lockdown in England

BMA has launched a [new report warning that lifting lockdown](#) in England without new measures in place risks deepening the crisis in our health service, and will leave hospitals and GP practices overwhelmed, unable to provide even the most critical of patient care.

The report outlines major reforms for England, once lockdown is lifted, to keep infection rates low and pull back the NHS from collapse this winter. The BMA is calling for the new measures – to bridge the time between the planned end of lockdown in England, on December 2nd, and an effective vaccine programme getting underway – to be rapidly brought in. Read more [here](#)

Level 4 lockdown restrictions in Scotland

First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, has [announced](#) that 11 areas of Scotland (City of Glasgow, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire, East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Lothian) will move to level 4 COVID restrictions (highest) from today, Friday 20 November and will remain in place until 11 December.

Update from NI conference 14 Nov

I attended the virtual [Northern Ireland LMC Conference](#) themed ‘*The radical reshaping of general practice by the pandemic – where do we see our future service?*’ last weekend. Alan Stout, NIGPC chair, gave a report and thanked both GPs and LMCs for their work during the pandemic. He also reported that over the course of the pandemic NIGPC had worked tirelessly and negotiated a contract freeze for GPs, an immediate extension of the sickness scheme, indemnity for all Covid-19 related work, and extension to the death in service scheme, flu vaccination programme and better and enough PPE for practices. NIGPC is currently in discussions with the Department of Health and the Public Health Agency regarding the covid vaccine. Achieving a solution to the indemnity situation

is the committee’s priority as despite investment into practices to cover costs and increases over the past three years, the financial risk in particular to individual practitioners still remains. Please see attached a report from the meeting as well as the resolutions. This was also reported by [GPonline](#).

England LMC conference

We have today emailed participants of the conference and LMCs with some important information ahead of the conference, including how to connect to the [virtual LMC conference platform](#), and importance to test broadband access and to log in as soon as possible.

Please read the information now as there are things that you need to do in advance of conference.

The deadline for proposer to submit a pre-record a video of their speech has been extended to **5pm Monday 23 November**. These should be emailed to info.lmconference@bma.org.uk and using a MP4 format if that is possible.

The deadlines for submissions for chosen motions etc are:

Item	Deadline for submission
Chosen motions (see note below)	9am on Wednesday 25 November
Notification of rider	9am on Thursday 26 November
Notification of amendment	9am on Thursday 26 November
Emergency motions	9am on Thursday 26 November

Please submit these to the LMC conference inbox which is info.lmconference@bma.org.uk

Elections will take place using the BMA’s online election system – representatives will be sent a link from the BMA online election team and please loom out for that.

The deadline to submit questions for the executive team and policy leads has been extended to Monday **23 November**, and should be emailed to Karen Day (kday@bma.org.uk).

Bone health card to help patients stay on osteoporosis medication

Each year a large number of people suffer from fragility fractures, and over three quarters of people who are prescribed osteoporosis medication are not on treatment a year on from their fracture. People who have sustained one fragility fracture are twice as likely to sustain another, which can be life altering and it has been shown that osteoporosis medication needs to be taken continuously for several years to be effective at preventing further fractures.

The Royal College of Physicians’ Fragility Fractures Audit Programme (FFFAP) has, in collaboration with the BMA’s GP committee and the Royal College of GPs, developed [the bone health card](#) to help patients with fragility fractures to discuss their medication and any issues with their primary healthcare team to ensure key information is discussed when reviewing medication and where to get further information and support.

PCN Clinical Director survey

A reminder that the BMA’s second edition of its [annual survey of PCN Clinical Directors](#) is open until 23 November. This aim of the survey is to fully understand the situation on the frontline, by asking clinical directors for their unique insights into the recruitment of the new workforce, the delivery of services throughout the pandemic and the future of PCNs.

The responses will contribute to our ability to respond to the issues and challenges PCNs are experiencing, and will help to support the long-term development of PCNs and help inform the BMA for its annual negotiations with NHSE/I.

Please encourage your PCN clinical director to complete the survey [here](#)

Parental leave webinar and workshop

We will be hosting a webinar and a workshop for [GPs on parental leave](#) on:

2 December from 12.30pm – 2.00pm – *Webinar - 'GP Maternity and Parental leave Guide: launch and introduction to the guide'*. Register [here](#)

9 December from 12.30pm – 2.30pm – *Workshop - 'GP maternity'*. Register [here](#)

If you would like to submit questions in advance to be covered at either session, please contact Christopher Scott via cscott@bma.org.uk

BMA COVID-19 guidance

Read our [COVID-19 toolkit for GPs and practices](#), to help answer questions on a large range of topics relating to COVID-19. There is also guidance on the following topics:

- [Model terms of engagement for a GP providing temporary COVID-19 services](#)
- [Terms and conditions for sessional GPs](#)
- [Risk assessments](#)

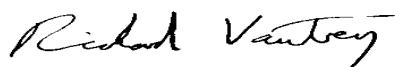
COVID-19 media

[GPonline](#) reported on a motion due to be debated at the Welsh LMC conference tomorrow, that practices do not have 'the time or financial resources' to deliver large-scale vaccination campaigns over and above those they already carry out.

See this week's GP bulletin [here](#).

Have a good weekend

Richard



Richard Vautrey

Chair, BMA GPs committee