

LMC Update Email
1 October 2021

Dear colleagues,

Richard Vautrey is taking some long-overdue leave, and so this week's update comes to you from rainy Devon.

Tackling abuse and aggression towards GPs

As you will be aware, over the last few months, reports of patient abuse and aggression toward GPs and practice staff have increased, coinciding with very high levels of pressures in general practice.

At the same time, patients and the media are calling on general practice to increase face-to-face appointments, whilst [government infection control guidance](#) remains for practices to ensure social distancing and make use of remote consultations to protect patients and staff, when we know that most practices are providing a balance of remote triage, telephone, digital and face-to-face appointments based on their assessment of patient need.

Richard met with the Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, last week and [called on the government to enable and support general practice](#) over the coming winter. At that meeting we made it crystal clear how unacceptable the increasing abuse against GPs and the general practice workforce is, fuelled by a damaging and demoralising misinformation campaign in some parts of the media, as well as comments from politicians.

Following that meeting we have written to the Secretary of State again to outline our key asks to support and to protect practices against abuse, which include:

- Providing clear public backing for GPs, recognising the huge pressure they are under
- Invest urgently in primary care and remove unnecessary bureaucracy
- Support increased sentencing for those who assault healthcare workers
- Commitment to work with the BMA on a national campaign to stop abuse of the NHS staff

In the last few days we have had discussions both with officials from the Department of Health and Social Care and NHSE/I on these key asks, but we are clear that there remains an urgency to deliver them. They have confirmed they will return to us next week with some firm proposals for a package of support for General Practice focused on quickly tackling abuse / aggression, low morale and unmanageable workload.

Consultant support for GPs

The BMA consultants committee are showing its support in their statement published today, unequivocally condemning the unacceptable abuse against hardworking and dedicated GPs and the general practice workforce – read the statement [here](#). We wholeheartedly welcome this support from our consultant colleagues.



Support your surgery campaign

The BMA continue to campaign in defence of GPs and their staff with our [Support Your Surgery campaign](#) to get the backing of patients to make the changes to primary care that are so urgently needed.

Please continue to show your support by signing the [Support Your Surgery petition](#) and sharing it with colleagues, friends, and families. It's important to get as many signatures as possible to put pressure on the Government to 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 us 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 us reach as many people with the campaign as possible.

Following increasing instances of GPs being scapegoated by the media and rising instances of abuse against GPs and their staff, 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.

COVID-19 vaccinations

Boosters for health care staff

Health and social care workers can now book their COVID-19 vaccination boosters through the [National Booking Service](#) or by calling 119.

As part of the booking process, staff will need to self-declare they are a frontline health or social care worker, and they will also be asked to provide as proof of employment as an eligible health or social care worker using a workplace photo ID.

Booster vaccinations can be administered no earlier than six months after completion of the primary vaccine course.

Medical exemptions

A systematic medical exemptions process is being introduced today, 30 September, to ensure that those who, for medical reasons, should not be vaccinated (and/or be tested) for COVID-19 are not disadvantaged across certification use cases.

Given the need for clinical judgement and access to patient records, the Department of Health and Social Care are asking GPs, secondary care clinicians and midwives to assess applications. Steps have been taken to ensure this does not impact workload (e.g. no appointment required, pre-screening process).

Read the [guidance](#) detailing the process and clinical criteria and payment mechanisms (for GPs).

Vaccine Data Resolution Service (VDRS)

The Vaccine Data Resolution Service (VDRS), established by NHSE/I and NHS Digital, aims to resolve missing or incorrect vaccination records for people vaccinated in England who have a current NHS number and are registered with a GP practice in England.

A pilot of outbound calls was launched on 3 August to patients identified as having a second dose but where no first dose is showing on the national immunisation database (NIMS). This service continues to operate. An inbound service accessed has also been launched, and referrals to the VDRS can be made via any of the services accessed via 119.

Note that 119 and VDRS call agents will not provide clinical advice and cannot assist with queries related to vaccinations received overseas. If the query relates to personal information that is incorrect on the patient record (e.g. name, address), these will still need to be resolved by their GP practice. If a member of the public believes they have missing or incorrect COVID-19 vaccination data, they should be advised to call 119.

Flu vaccinations for primary care contractors and frontline staff

The [Enhanced Service Specification for Seasonal influenza vaccination programme 2021/22](#) has now been published. We have been lobbying for many years for GPs and practice employees to be included within specification for the annual flu programme and for practices to be able to claim an item of service fee for giving flu vaccinations to their staff.

We are therefore pleased that we have now been able to secure agreement with NHSE/I to the inclusion of all frontline practice staff in the Enhanced Service. All practice staff with patient contact, including both medical and administrative staff, will now be eligible to receive a flu vaccination from employing practice or the practice at which they are registered as a patient, and practices will receive an item of service fee for their provision. As in previous years locum GPs will also continue to be eligible for a free vaccination. The provision of flu vaccination to all target groups will therefore be covered under CNSGP.

NHSE/I has also [published guidance](#) (available on the Future NHS platform) on the process for recording flu vaccinations administered to patients not registered with a practice.

GP Recruitment Campaign 2021 (England)

HEE (Health Education England) has just begun campaign activity to raise awareness of Round 1 GP specialty training applications, scheduled to open Thursday 4 November – Wednesday 1 December for an August 2022 start. GPC has been working in partnership with HEE since September 2015 and GP trainee numbers have increased by 36% during that period - from 5,026 to 6,855 in July 2021.

Whilst continuing to signpost doctors who might be thinking about a career as a GP to the [GPNRO website pages](#), HEE is keen not to simply rely solely on social media or online content, and would like to hear innovative ideas and thoughts about how to reach more doctors via gprecruitment@hee.nhs.uk

Thank you to all those that have come forward and volunteered to help create lots of new content to populate the new [Choose GP Instagram page](#), which complements the [Facebook](#) community.

NHS 111 Booking into general practice

During the pandemic a temporary change was made to the requirement for practices to make available to NHS 111 one appointment per 3000 registered patients to one appointment per 500 registered patients. This temporary change will stop at the end of September 2021 and the contractual requirement will revert to 1:3000.

Medicines Delivery Service extension (England)

An extension of the medicines delivery service has been announced by NHSE/I. The [announcement letter](#) explains that to help provide support to people who have been notified of the need to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, the Community Pharmacy Home Delivery Service and the Dispensing Doctor Home Delivery Service will be commissioned from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 (inclusive) for anyone living in England who has been notified by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate.

GPC UK elections

Voting is now open for a representative for Hampshire and Isle of Wight in the GPC UK by-election. Submit your vote [here](#). Voting closes on 7 October at midday.

Nominations are open for the following seats:

- Representative for East and West Sussex 2021-24
- Representative for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire 2021-24

You must be a BMA member to stand in this election.

Submit your nomination [here](#). The deadline for nominations is midday on 7 October.

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, after which you will be given an ID number which you will need to share with the [elections team](#) to enable them to give you access.

Media

Following the [meeting with the Secretary of State](#) last week, [The Daily Telegraph](#), [Pulse](#) and [GP online](#) carried our comments, with Dr Vautrey saying: "The Secretary of State must confront the reality of unsustainable workload pressures, poor premises, the impact of the care backlog and secondary care work transfer to general practice and we urged him to trust practices to deliver services to patients without the rigidity, bureaucracy and burden of QOF or unnecessary CQC inspections." It was also reported by the [BMJ](#)

Wearing face masks in healthcare settings

[Pulse](#) reported that GPs around the UK are urging patients to continue wearing face masks when visiting practices to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. GPC England members Dr Brian Balmer, Dr Jackie Applebee, as well as Dr Phil White, chair of GPC Wales, and Dr Andrew Cowie, deputy chair of Scottish GPC were all quoted.

Data shows more GP appointments than pre-pandemic levels

The [Independent](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Daily Express](#), [Sun](#), [Times](#), [ITV](#), [Pulse](#), [National World](#), over two hundred local and regional press outlets, [Yahoo! MSN](#) and [AOL](#) all picked up our [press release](#) on appointment data and the fact that, despite having less staff, practices continue to do more work now than before the pandemic.

ARRS funding needs to be "as flexible as possible"

[GP Online](#) reported on GPC's warning that millions of pounds in unspent 'additional roles' recruitment funding must not be lost to general practice.

Issues continuing with PCSE pensions portal

[GP Online](#) carried GPC comments on the GP pay impact as late pension deductions leave practices facing cashflow problem.

Fuel crisis

The BMA issued a [press release](#) this week in response to reports about fuel shortages around the country which calls for healthcare workers to be prioritised for fuel due to the impact this may have on their ability to carry out their work. I did a pre-recorded an interview with ITV News, shown on the lunch time news on Tuesday, and I also featured on LBC live and BBC London live at 16.40.

Wales

Dr Phil White, Chair of GPC Wales, has outlined the pressures in general practice in Wales, calling for greater funding needed to ensure patient support. Read his statement [here](#)

Read the GP bulletin [here](#).

Read the latest sessional GPs newsletter [here](#)

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

I hope you all have a restful weekend.

Warm regards,

Mark

Mark Sanford-Wood
Deputy Chair, GPC England