

LMC Update Email
29 October 2021

Dear colleagues

BMA to undertake an indicative ballot of practices on potential action

Further to last week's emergency GPC England meeting, the necessary preparations have been made and, next week, we will proceed with an indicative ballot of all practices in England.

Our condemnation of the DHSC (Department of Health and Social Care) and NHSEI plan stands, and we are now seeking the support of practices to demonstrate to Government and NHSEI that GPs and practices will not tolerate this unacceptable situation. We will give practices their say on further potential actions we can all take to persuade ministers and NHSEI to give practices the real support they require so that they can care for their patients as needed, not least over this expected very difficult winter period.

The BMA will now proceed to the indicative ballot of practices, which will open *this* Monday.

It will be based on the resolutions passed by GPCE last week and will include questions on further actions practices might be prepared to take, such as:

- participating in a coordinated and continuous withdrawal from the PCN DES at the next opt-out period
- disengaging, on a continuous basis, from the PCN DES before the next opt-out period
- not complying, on a continuous basis, with the contractual requirement to ensure GPs earning over the earnings threshold declare their income or to provide COVID vaccination exemption certificates
- participate in a coordinated and continuous change to your appointment book, so as to impact the quality of the nationally reported appointment dataset.

UPDATE 01.11.2021 – We've now had a briefing approved quoting advice from leading Queen's Counsel on LMCs lawfully being able to hold undated PCN DES resignations, so we are sharing with LMCs now (attached) for information.

It is important to stress that these actions are not directed at patients, or the care they receive, but at Government and NHSEI. The timescales are as follows:

Launch the indicative ballot with details for how to vote electronically (**Monday 1st November**)

Physical reminder letters reach GP partner members / practices (**from 5th November**)

The electronic ballot closes (**13th / 14th November**)

The ballot data is processed (**15th / 16th November**)

Results will be communicated to members (**18th / 19th November**).

The BMA is also preparing for a formal ballot of members on IA (industrial action), which for legal reasons could not have happened sooner than *at least* six weeks after the emergency GPCE meeting last week.



Moving to an indicative ballot of practices before a formal ballot of members on IA also means we not only get to gather the views of practices on the proposed forms of actions much more swiftly, but it also means we can keep pressure up nationally by using the result as further leverage in the interim.

General Practice is being pilloried and abused and together there is a need to fight back, protect and defend. This is an extremely difficult time for us all. We must support one another and stand together. This is not going to be easy, but the BMA will do all in its power to back GPs at this time.

Further information on the ballot will be shared with practices this Monday.

We are also rapidly developing additional workload management resources and guidance, which we will release in the coming days.

As it is clear that neither the Government nor NHSE/I understands the scale of the crisis impacting general practice, or have provided the necessary measures to support the profession at this critical time, we would encourage practices to review our [workload control in general practice paper](#).

Read our statement following the GPCE vote rejecting the Government and NHSEI (NHS England and NHS Improvement) plan [here](#)

Our [analysis](#) of the Government and NHSE/I [plan](#)

Supporting general practice against abuse

The BMA continues to campaign against abuse of GPs and their staff with a number of resources available on [Support Your Surgery campaign](#) page, in order to get the changes that are so urgently needed to support general practice teams.

Please continue to show your support by signing the [Support Your Surgery petition](#) to put pressure on the Government to support general practice and use our resources to explain to patients why practices need to work in the way they are doing in order to protect patients from a rising incidence of COVID-19 and to make the best use of the available but limited workforce.

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.

The GPCE chair and BMA Patient Liaison Group chair have also recently written to a host of patient groups asking for their support. Please feel free to share the [template letter](#) amongst your local patient groups.

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

Our [GP campaign factsheet](#) 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.

Covid vaccination medical exemption certification

The government has introduced an [exemption process](#) for those who are unable to be vaccinated and/or tested for COVID-19 for medical reasons.

This guidance applies to England only.

BMA guidance on the Covid vaccination medical exemption certification process is available [here](#).

Your wellbeing

The BMA is here for you and offers supportive [wellbeing services which include face-to-face counselling](#). You can access one-off support or, after triage, a structured course of up to six face-to-face counselling sessions. Call **0330 123 1245** today or [visit the website](#) for more information.

For all other support, speak to a BMA adviser on [0300 123 1233](#) or email support@bma.org.uk

[Read more about doctors' wellbeing during the pandemic](#) and on [Twitter @TheBMA](#)

BMA Webinar - The Health and Care Bill (England)

The BMA is holding a member [webinar on the Health and Care Bill: What it means for you and what you can do about it](#) – on **Wednesday 17th November, 7-8pm**.

The webinar will include:

- A breakdown by Dr David Wrigley, Deputy Chair of BMA Council, of what the Bill means and our lobbying activity so far
- Presentation of our new activism pack and the different steps members can take to help campaign for key changes to the Bill

The BMA believes that if this Bill is passed, it will usher in drastic changes to the NHS in England, impacting the working lives of doctors, and that urgent and significant changes must be made to it.

Therefore, we encourage all members to [register now](#) and attend this event to learn more about the Bill and what you can do about it.

If you have any questions about the event, please contact tbramwell@bma.org.uk.

For further information about the Bill and the BMA's work in this area, visit: www.bma.org.uk/hcb

Research on providing annual health checks for autistic people (England)

UCL's Centre for Research in Autism and Education ([CRAE](#)) is conducting a research project to understand the views of primary health care professionals on the value and feasibility of providing annual health checks for autistic people. By taking part, participants have the chance to shape policy recommendations and provide their opinions regarding the implementation of annual health checks for autistic people.

They are inviting GPs, nurses and other primary health care professionals in England who are involved in the implementation of other health checks (e.g., learning disability health checks, diabetes annual reviews etc) to take part in a short [survey](#).

Participants *do not* require any expertise in autism. Find out more by contacting Jade at j.davies@ucl.ac.uk.

BMA COVID-19 guidance

Read our [COVID-19 toolkit for GPs and practices](#), which provides comprehensive guidance for practices to manage contractual issues and service provision during the coronavirus pandemic.

You can access all the BMA guidance on COVID-19, including ethical guidance, [here](#)

Media

Government / NHSEI plan for general practice

Council chair Dr Chaand Nagpaul was featured in the [Guardian](#) on Friday, expressing worries about the 'support package' announced by the health secretary, which could damage the relationship between GPs and their patients at a time when general practice staff are facing increasing levels of abuse.

West Midlands regional council deputy chair Dr Mary McCarthy was also quoted in the [Shropshire Star](#) talking about the pressures on general practice, saying that without adequate staffing levels and resources, "hardworking GPs and practice staff are becoming more and more limited by factors beyond their control".

The rejection of the GP support package continued to receive attention, with coverage found among others in [Pulse](#) (also [here](#) and [here](#)), the [Daily Mail](#), and [Nursing in Practice](#) on Wednesday and on Thursday, in [Pulse](#) (also [here](#) and [here](#)) and the [New Statesman](#).

Pressure on General Practice

North West regional council deputy chair Dr Rob Barnett was interviewed on BBC1's [North West Tonight](#) on Monday evening (item at 1m10s, Dr Barnett's interview at 5m54s) about GP pressures.

NI GP committee deputy chair Dr Frances O'Hagan was interviewed in the [Belfast Telegraph](#) and on [The View from Stormont](#) about the growing pressures on the health services. Dr O'Hagan's interview was picked up today by the:

- [Irish News](#)
- [The Irish Times](#)
- [Belfast Telegraph](#)
- [News Letter](#)

[GP online](#) reported that the BMA demands honesty from the government and NHSE over GP workforce crisis. Doctors condemned the misleading claims from the government and NHSE that have downplayed the general practice workforce crisis and urged ministers to fix the GP shortage, rather than fix the data.

[Pulse](#) wrote an article on myth busting the rescue plan, outlining that demand outstrips supply, there are not enough GPs to provide what the government and patients are asking for.

The [Financial Times](#) wrote a piece about many GPs choosing part-time or locum posts to avoid burnout.

COVID Vaccine and Booster Programme

NIGPC deputy chair Dr Frances O'Hagan was interviewed on [Sunday Politics programme](#) (15:04) about Covid infection rates and pressures on the health service. Dr O'Hagan's interview was picked up by all other [BBC News](#) outlets, the [Belfast Telegraph](#) and today's [London Daily News](#). She was also interviewed on the [Nolan Show](#) (06:50).

NIGPC chair Dr Alan Stout was interviewed in the [Belfast Telegraph](#) about Covid certificates. Dr Stout was also interviewed on [BBC Talkback](#) about the current situation with vaccine uptake. The piece begins at 04:29 with his interview at 11:34.

NIC chair Dr Tom Black was interviewed on [BBC Newslines](#) last night about mandatory vaccinations for health and social care workers. Dr Black's interview begins at 17:27. He was also interviewed yesterday in the [News Letter](#) on the same subject.

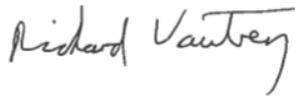
Read the GP bulletin [here](#).

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

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

Best wishes

Richard



Richard Vautrey
Chair, BMA GPs committee