

## LMC Update Email

22 September 2022

Dear colleagues

We began this week commemorating the life of Queen Elizabeth II. There has been substantial social and political change around the world during her stewardship of the nation, and her role in this will never be forgotten.

As King Charles III begins his reign, we also see the start of a new Parliament. While this could have been an opportunity to signal a change in step within Government - injecting some much needed hope and positivity into the profession - we have instead seen a further demonstration of the failure to understand the crisis in general practice.

Three health secretaries in six months has been the lead-up to the latest ill-informed missive from the current Health Secretary. I hasten to add, that none of [today's announcement](#) is underpinned by any contractual agreements and so for all intentions and purposes it's nothing more than a lot of hot air. But of course, the reality is that these divisive political statements set us up to fail in our communities and with our patients. I do wish to believe that the Health Secretary has her heart in the right place, and hope that in the coming days and weeks, my team and I can help her find a way to deliver the care we all so desperately wish to enable. Read my [full statement in response](#)

The [Government's Plan for Patients](#) also looks to change the NHS pension scheme to help retain doctors and other NHS staff to increase capacity, but is [not the long term fix the NHS needs](#). Read also the [statement about the plan](#) by BMA Chair of Council, Professor Phil Banfield

I expect to return to work in 2023. I will write again before I go on leave.

### **GPC England meeting**

GPs Committee England met today, Thursday 22 September, in an emergency meeting to discuss our concerns about ongoing pressures in general practice and any potential actions that GPs can take as a profession in response to the underinvestment by the government and the crippling workloads faced by GPs. The Committee also debated the GP contract, discussing what needs to be done to support practices struggling with inadequate premises, maintaining the declining workforce, bureaucracy, and our negotiating strategy for the forthcoming year. The GPC England representatives will be providing reports from the meeting to their constituencies.

We also held a one minute silence in memory of Her Majesty the Queen, Elizabeth II. The [BMA has offered its deepest and most sincere condolences to the Royal Family](#).

Read updates from the meeting on the BMA GP twitter account [@BMA\\_GP / Twitter](#)

### **GP pressures**

GP practices continue work under immense pressure with rising demand and a huge shortage of GPs, and colleagues are now also bracing themselves for a torrid winter in the NHS as the combined pressures of COVID and flu, as well as the enormous NHS backlog, threaten to shatter our fragile health service.



As shown by the latest [GP practice workforce data](#), published today, as of August 2022 we now have the equivalent of 1,850 fewer fully qualified full-time GPs compared to September 2015. This long-term decline coincides with a rise in patients: in August 2022, there was a record-high total of almost 61.9 million patients registered, with a record high average of 9,576 patients per practice, an increase of 16% patients each full-time equivalent GP is responsible for since 2015, demonstrating the mounting workload in general practice.

I recently wrote to the new Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Dr Thérèse Coffey to highlight the pressures general practice is facing as we approach the winter months, including vaccine delivery, increased patient demand and rising utility and premises costs and called for her to work with us in addressing these issues. However, [today's announcement from the Secretary of State](#), which promises to improve access to general practice by freeing up over 3 million appointments, so all patients who need an appointment can get one within two weeks, while well intentioned, falls well short of what's needed and there simply aren't enough GPs and staff to deliver the care our patients need and deserve.

We have also met with Shadow Secretary of State Wes Streeting MP's advisors, to discuss the current state of general practice workload and workforce and the impact this is having on the wellbeing of practice staff. Read more about the pressures in general practice [here](#)

### **Workload and wellbeing**

In our last newsletter we wrote about the overwhelming pressures that we face each day in general practice, encouraging practices to spend some time on 9 September focusing on their own team's wellbeing and identifying the best ways of supporting each other's mental health, ahead of World Suicide Prevention Day on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

We encouraged practices to think about how you manage your workload as set out in our [Workload Control in General Practice](#) and [Safe working in general practice](#) documents. We also published guidance on [How to improve the safety of your service and wellbeing of your workforce](#), setting out safe limits of the numbers of patient contacts per day, and what is considered 'essential services' under the GMS contract.

A recent [BMJ article](#) has shown that a substantial proportion of healthcare professionals report symptoms of burnout, and that there is the need for urgent action to protect patients, physicians, and health systems.

We will be producing further guidance on safe working, and please let us know if you have any feedback on how we can develop further tools to help practices: [info.lmcqueries@bma.org.uk](mailto:info.lmcqueries@bma.org.uk)

### **Wellbeing resources**

A range of wellbeing and support services are available to doctors, and we encourage anybody who is feeling under strain to seek support. Please take a moment to check in on your colleagues' wellbeing and look out for each other.

Support comes in various forms, from our 24/7 confidential [counselling and peer support services](#) to networking groups and wellbeing hubs with peers, as well as the [NHS practitioner health service](#) and non-medical support services such as [Samaritans](#).

See our [poster with 10 tips to help maintain and support the wellbeing](#) of you and your colleagues.

Please visit the BMA's [wellbeing support services page](#) for further information and resources.

For all other support, speak to a BMA adviser on [0300 123 1233](tel:03001231233) or email [support@bma.org.uk](mailto:support@bma.org.uk). We encourage you to access any of the support resources and encourage colleagues to do so too.

### **Suicide prevention - priorities in the next decade – lunchtime webinar**

The BMA's Board of Science is hosting a live lunchtime (12.30-13.30) webinar on 19 October, where Dr JS Bamrah will speak to Prof Louis Appleby, from the University of Manchester.

Prof Appleby leads the National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England and directs the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness. Prof Appleby will present on current suicide prevention priorities, tying in with recently announced suicide prevention strategy from the UK government, before answering questions from the chair and the audience.

This event is free, and open to both BMA members and non-members. You can sign up for it [here](#)

If you have any questions, you can get in touch with the board via [info.bos@bma.org.uk](mailto:info.bos@bma.org.uk)

### ***PCN DES question***

In each newsletter we plan to include a question on current issue, which will be used to help form thoughts at GPCE and in negotiations. This will take only a couple of minutes of your time.

***If given the opportunity today, with the knowledge you now have about the Network DES and how PCNs are working in reality, would you sign up for the Network DES? Answer [here](#) by 29 September***

### **Vaccines and Immunisations**

NHSE/I has produced draft specifications for both COVID-19 and flu vaccinations. We expect that these will be published in the next few days. We have fed back to NHSE/I that further clarification is required regarding the ability and/or requirement for practices to vaccinate frontline patient-facing staff, and reiterated our concerns about the extremely tight timeframes associated with the vaccination of care home residents. NHSE/I has intimated practices will be indemnified for vaccinating their own staff, and we will share official confirmation as soon as possible.

We have also been firm in our objections to NHSE/I's plans to implement a national call/recall flu programme for 2-3 year olds. We fully recognise that ensuring good flu vaccine uptake is a key public health priority heading into winter. However, the timing proposed by NHSE/I – with emails and texts to parents and guardians to go out on 21 September – is extremely unfortunate, coming directly on the heels of an unscheduled bank holiday with the significant administrative burden this entails. We have made strong representations to NHSE/I that this will create additional demand at a time where there is no capacity to spare.

### **Email your MP to solve the NHS pension crisis**

It is vital MPs understand the impact the current punitive pension taxation rules are having on retention across the already understaffed general practice workforce and the steps which must be taken to solve the issue, both in the short and long term, to allow doctors to stay in the NHS for longer. Please ask your MP to take action using our online tool [here](#)

**Advice for managing long COVID with GP staff**

While the symptoms may vary, and the diagnosis may be slow to be confirmed, long COVID is most likely to be categorised as a disability in employment terms. This means that, as an employer, you must take extra care in managing the employment relationship – not just managing the absences themselves but also in the day-to-day management of staff affected, to ensure employees are not suffering a detriment as a result of their condition. Investing time and skill early in the process can reduce the long-term liabilities of the practice and encourage a supportive working environment. Talk to the [BMA's Employment Advisory Service](#) to get support with your staff employment issues.

**Three ways the BMA can support GPs managing HR issues**

As a GP partner or practice manager, your BMA membership includes HR and employment law advice and practical support. Read our [blog to](#) find out how we can help with:

1. non-compliant contracts
2. resolving relationship grievances
3. untangling complex procedures.

**Best Practice Show, 12-13 October 2022, NEC Birmingham**

The BMA and GPC England will have a dedicated theatre at the at [Best Practice Show](#) at the NEC Birmingham on 12-13 October 2022. The programme focusses on the most pressing issues facing general practice, including the future of general practice, working within ICSs, workload management, workforce management and primary care estates.

**Free** for healthcare professionals, the conference programme will provide up to 12 hours of CPD certified training, expertly tailored to meet the training requirements of healthcare professionals.

If you are interested in attending, you can register [here](#).

**Read the latest GP bulletin (England) [here](#)**

Have you got any information you would like to share via the GPC update to LMCs? Email us on [info.lmcqueries@bma.org.uk](mailto:info.lmcqueries@bma.org.uk). Deadline for submissions is Monday, 3 October.

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

With warmest wishes,

Farah

**Dr Farah Jameel**  
**Chair, GPC England**