

Dear colleagues

### **GP contract update**

As you may be aware, [GPC England recently voted to reject the initial contract offer](#) from NHS England. We met with Steven Barclay, Secretary of State for Health, yesterday in a final bid to negotiate meaningful changes that would provide security and sustainability for practices and patients in England. However, Mr Barclay refused to come forth with any improved offer.

We approached the meeting in a spirit of collaboration hopeful that the Secretary of State would listen to our evidence and logic and be willing to take meaningful action to support practices and their patients when they need it most. We were therefore dismayed at his refusal to offer anything more than NHS England's insulting offer last month.

It is particularly frustrating that the Government has insisted on sticking to the financial uplifts set out in the '5 year framework' agreed in 2019 (allowing for a 2.1% pay uplift for all GPs, practice staff and practice expenses) despite the extreme change in economic circumstances that has seen a massive inflationary spike over the last 12 months, and significant increases in workload since the pandemic.

Whilst we have secured some welcome changes in the contract, including a reduction in IIF indicators we are disappointed in the inability of NHS England or the Government to adequately compromise on a number of ongoing issues that were raised during negotiations, including declaration of earnings, online access to records, or to allow a relaxation of QOF and IIF in order to allow practices to focus upon core patient care.

The Committee is now assessing its options in terms of the impending imposition of a contract for 23/24, including potential future balloting and industrial action.

Read my statement about the meeting with the Secretary of State for Health [here](#)

Details and guidance will also be published on the BMA website shortly.

### **2023/24 GP contract update webinars**

Those wishing to attend one of the GP contract update webinars in March can now register via the [BMA website](#). The GPCE officers will deliver the same presentation at each webinar, meaning that attendees need only attend the event most convenient to them. The planned dates and times are:

Tuesday 21st March 19.00-20.30

Wednesday 22nd March 12.30-14.00

Wednesday 29th March 19.00-20.30

Thursday 30th March 12.30-14.00

Thursday 30th March 19.00-20.30

Register [here](#)

### **GP workload pressures and safe working guidance**

GP practices continue to experience significant and growing strain with declining GP numbers and rising demand, as shown yet again by the latest [GP workforce figures](#).

In January 2023, 88 GPs left the NHS and there is **2078** fewer fully qualified GPs than in 2015. At the same time, each GP now has 2283 patients to care for, which is 18% more than in 2015. It is no wonder patients are finding it difficult get appointments and years of neglect by this government has led to an NHS on its knees.

As Emma Runswick, Deputy Chair of BMA, [commented](#):

“In General Practice, the issue isn't access. It's capacity. We have over 2000 fewer GPs than in 2015, and rising demand from people with multiple conditions and complex needs. Government needs to resource for retention as well as recruitment.”

If Government doesn't urgently get a grip on the crisis, we will see numbers fall even further. It is so important to retain the workforce and for practices to focus on their own wellbeing, whilst continuing to face these [overwhelming pressures in general practice](#).

We encourage practices to continue to review their working practices in reference to our [safe working guidance](#) to prioritise care to manage the finite workforce and resources available.

With GPs working under such great pressures the BMA is also here to [support your wellbeing](#). You can also [read about our work to improve the mental health of the profession](#), including new research and our wellbeing charter.

A range of wellbeing and support services are available to doctors, 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](#).

The organisation [Doctors in Distress](#) also provides mental health support for health workers in the UK, providing confidential peer support group sessions.

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

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

NHS England is running a series of facilitated peer wellbeing sessions for the primary care workforce. Each peer wellbeing group will be made up of six-eight people that will meet fortnightly for four weeks. [Register your interest here by Friday 10 March](#).

*We will also be producing some further resources on practice workload and wellbeing in time for Stress Awareness month in April.*

### **Junior doctors' strike action - guidance for GP trainees and GP practices**

[Junior doctors \(including GP trainees\)](#) will be taking *industrial action* from 13-16 March. With this in mind, we have published comprehensive guidance for GP practices across England which you can now read here. The guidance covers everything from managing the impact of strike action on practice work to GP trainee rotas and information on how GP practices can support GP trainees financially. We'd encourage you to familiarise yourself with all guidance before the strike days.

Thank you once again for your solidarity with GP trainees and junior doctors. 98% of junior doctors voted in favour of strike action and more junior doctors voted than ever before. This gives us a huge mandate, and puts the government under intense pressure. This is a step in the right direction for full pay restoration not just for junior doctors, but the whole profession.

The LMC England Conference also passed a motion in November 2022, offering public support to all junior doctors, including GP trainees, in their pursuit for pay restoration to 2008 levels. This support was further demonstrated by GPC England, where a motion was passed with no votes against, offering support to all junior doctors, particularly GP trainees, in their pursuit for full pay restoration.

Join the GP profession in standing with GP trainees in their fight for fair pay. Show your support for the future of healthcare in England.

We have also produced a poster you may want to display in your practice, a patient information leaflet, and an infographic that can be used on your website, which can be [ordered online](#).

You can download further guidance for practices and LMCs, such as impact on GP trainees rotas, running of GP practices and how to support GP trainees during the strike on the [BMA website](#).

### **GP trainee visas**

We have written to the immigration minister regarding the BMA's ongoing concerns over barriers facing GP trainees to staying and working in the UK on completing their training. The letter followed the Minister's [commitment](#) to ensuring officials in the Home Office are working with the DHSC and the BMA to consider umbrella sponsorship as a solution to the problem – something the BMA has repeatedly called for to help create a welcoming environment that ensures the UK attracts and retains talented doctors to help address the shrinking medical workforce in general practice. Stressing the importance of measures being in place to facilitate smooth transition into full time employment ahead of the next cohort of GP trainees completing their training, the letter calls on the Minister to consider a six month grace period as a temporary measure whilst conversations on an umbrella route continue. A grace period would help alleviate some of the stress and anxiety felt by GP trainees coming to the end of their training by providing them with a six-month window to find a GP practice to employ them.

### **GPC elections**

Voting is now open for seats to the General Practitioners Committee (GPC) in the following regions:

- Hillingdon/Brent & Harrow/Ealing, Hammersmith & Hounslow
- Lewisham, Southwark & Lambeth/Bexley & Greenwich/Bromley
- Cheshire/Mid Mersey
- Northumberland/Newcastle & N Tyneside/Gateshead & S Tyneside/Sunderland
- Gloucs/Avon
- Bucks/Oxfordshire
- Berks/N&E Hamps
- Barnsley/Doncaster/Rotherham/Sheffield

- Leics & Rutland/Northants
- N Staffs/S Staffs/Shropshire
- Sandwell/Walsall/Wolverhampton/Dudley

To submit your vote for any of the above seats please visit <https://elections.bma.org.uk/>.  
**(The deadline for voting 12pm Thursday 30 March 2023).**

To be eligible to stand or vote in a constituency, you must be one of the following:

- a GP engaged exclusively or predominantly in providing personally or performing
- NHS primary medical services for a minimum of 52 sessions distributed evenly
- over six months in the year immediately before election\*
- a GP on the doctors' retainer scheme
- a medically qualified LMC secretary.

*To vote in this election you must have a BMA web account, if you do not have one please click [here](#) to create one, follow the [link](#) to 'request a temporary non-member account' and email the number to [elections@bma.org.uk](mailto:elections@bma.org.uk) to get access to vote. It is essential to email your temporary number to the elections inbox as you have to be granted voting access manually.*

If you have any queries regarding the election process, please contact [elections@bma.org.uk](mailto:elections@bma.org.uk).

### **Wellbeing**

As we continue to face overwhelming pressures in general practice, we encourage practices to focus on their own team's wellbeing.

A range of wellbeing and support services are available to doctors, 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](#).

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### **GPC England committee pages and guidance for practices**

Read more about the work of the [Committee](#)

Read practical guidance for [GP practices](#)

See the latest update on Twitter: [@BMA\\_GP / Twitter](#) [@TheBMA / Twitter](#)

Read about BMA in the media: [BMA media centre | British Medical Association](#)

Contact us: [info.GPC@bma.org.uk](mailto:info.GPC@bma.org.uk)

Read the last GP bulletin: [GP contract update | general practice pressures | guidance for working during industrial action](#)

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