



Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire LMC Ltd: Weekly Update for Practices, Monday 17th January 2022

1. Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) , risk assessments, and provision of respirators

Omicron is more transmissible than previous variants of COVID-19 which increase the risk of general practice workforce contracting the disease. To reduce this risk BMA Occupational Medicine Committee is drafting guidance for workplaces to advise that employers should carry out risk assessments and provide mitigations to reduce risk of contracting COVID. This guidance will be published in full shortly and we will circulate it to practices when we see it.

In the meantime an [abbreviated guideline](#) has been developed by GPC England for GP practices to use, which includes a template letter to CCGs requesting support with getting RPE supply.

BMA/GPC continues to call for GPs to either have access to or reimbursement of associated costs of appropriate RPE and have urged NHSE/I to provide FFP2 masks as a default for all practices, and for availability for FFP3 and fit testing where appropriate.

2. Requirement for COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of deployment

In November, the Department of Health and Social Care [announced](#) the requirement for [COVID vaccinations as a condition of deployment](#) in the health and social care sector. Health and social care workers who have face-to-face contact with patients, will need to provide evidence they have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in order to be deployed unless they are exempt. Unvaccinated individuals will need to have had their first dose by 3 February, in order to have had their second dose by the 1 April 2022 deadline, in line with recommended intervals between vaccinations.

This will have implications for general practice above those felt in other branches of practice. General practices are both contractor and provider which complicates the issue. Practices typically do not have the physical space to separate unvaccinated workforce into non-clinical areas.

NHSE/I has published initial [Phase 1 guidance](#) to support providers in preparing and planning for when the regulations (which are still subject to parliamentary passage) are introduced.

Last Friday NHSE issued further [Phase 2 guidance](#) which includes a [covering letter](#), and [FAQs](#). We understand that further guidance explicit to Primary care will be issued imminently and we will forward this as soon as it is available.

Note that this is not a NHSE/I-led commissioning requirement but a legal one related to CQC registration and the regulations.

Practices are already straining with workforce shortages and enforcing this new vaccination condition is going to an added burden. Practices will need to identify who has not received the vaccination and have discussions regarding their ongoing role. NHSE/I guidance advises, “*as independent employers, primary care providers may wish to seek individual legal advice.*”

3. GPC is developing a set of FAQs to address redeployment, termination, and implications for practices

GPC hopes to release the guidance before the end of the month, but much of it will depend on the wording of the legislation itself, which has not yet been seen. We will circulate this to practices when we see it. The guidance will be added to as more questions are asked and more information becomes available.

The Royal College of Nursing has also produced a [COVID-19 workplace risk assessment toolkit](#) which may also be helpful.

4. Confirmatory PCR tests temporarily suspended for positive lateral flow device (LFD) test results

Following the recent announcement by the [Health Security Agency](#) that asymptomatic people who receive positive lateral flow device test results for COVID-19 now won't be required to take a confirmatory PCR test, NHSE/I has published [guidance on the implications for the NHS](#) and advice for practices for actions to take:

- 1:1 conversations with staff who have not had both doses of the vaccine
- robust local monitoring processes are in place for regular staff LFD testing
- staff (even if vaccinated) to carry out asymptomatic twice weekly LFD test and [report](#) results
- COVID-related sickness absence recorded in the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) where that is available
- staff offered continuous learning regarding [UKHSA's IPC guidance](#)

Note that anyone who develops one of the three main COVID-19 symptoms are still required to take a PCR test, and self-isolate if they get a positive test result.

Read BMA/GPC's simple [flowchart](#) about whether staff need to self-isolate.

5. COVID-19 vaccination programme

A [Patient Group Direction \(PGD\) and national protocol](#) have now been published for Comirnaty 30micrograms/dose COVID-19 mRNA vaccine V06.00

6. Guidance on assessment of COVID-19 patients in General Practice

With high numbers of symptomatic COVID patients, NHSE/I has now released some [guidance on assessment, monitoring and treatment of symptomatic patients in General Practice and 111](#). The guidance seeks to explain the COVID Oximetry @home pathway, Covid Virtual Wards and Hospital @ Home in more detail. NHSE/I has also published guidance on [Supporting patients and bed capacity through virtual wards and COVID Oximetry @home](#) and BMA/GPC continues to contribute to national discussions where possible.

7. 2022/23 priorities and operational planning guidance

NHSE/I has also published [guidance on priorities and operational planning for 2022/23](#), based on a scenario where COVID-19 returns to a low level and the NHS make significant progress in restoring services and reducing the COVID backlogs in the first part of the year. The guidance includes future funding arrangements.

8. GP contracts and variation notices

The [model contracts and contract variation notices have now been published](#), including the general practice pay transparency obligations. But as previously communicated, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has confirmed the implementation of general practice pay transparency will be delayed until at least Spring 2022. You can read BMA/GPC's [guidance on declaring earnings](#)

9. Medicines Supply Tool

The Department of Health and Social Care and NHSE/I have now launched an online [Medicines Supply Tool](#), which provides up to date information about medicine supply issues. To access the Medicines Supply Tool, you will need to register with the [SPS \(Specialist Pharmacy Service\) website](#).

10. GP practice sponsorship process

The BMA has partnered with legal firm Magrath Sheldrick, who oversee the BMA's [immigration advice service](#), to develop a webinar on navigating the GP sponsorship process. The webinar is aimed at GP employers and offers practical tips on how to navigate the current sponsorship process to recruit non-UK nationals and addresses frequently asked questions on the process itself. Access the [webinar](#)

If you have any questions or would like to share your experiences of navigating the sponsorship process, please contact Caroline Strickland, Senior Policy Advisor, International Affairs, at the BMA (cstrickland@bma.org.uk).

11. Interested in being a GP Mentor in Herts & West Essex?

Information Event via Webinar: Weds 19th January, 2pm or Mon 24th January, 7pm

The purpose of this event is to enlist 10 GP mentors with a minimum of 8 years' experience, in addition to working three sessions per week in General Practice in Herts and West Essex to offer mentoring to New to Practice GPs.

All mentors will be required to deliver mentoring for 2 years, with the expectation that they will complete the ILM5 Certificate within the first year. Once the initial 6-week introduction to coaching training has been completed, each GP mentor will begin mentoring with New to Practice GPs or other mentees matched by Beds & Herts LMC.

For more information and to register your place, please [click here](#).

BHLMC Job Board - Advertise your practice vacancies or search for jobs on our [Job Board](#). If you are interested in posting an advert please contact lmadmin@bhlmc.co.uk for more information.

Locums - If you are a Locum and would like to receive LMC updates, please register via the [online form](#) to be added to our database and mailing list.

Workforce Wellbeing & Support [Visit our webpage](#).

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