



Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire LMC Ltd: Weekly Update for Practices, Monday 14th March 2022

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1. Safe working in general practice

General practice is in crisis, with increasing patient need and demand, coupled with a shrinking and exhausted workforce, as well as a vast backlog of care following from the COVID-19 pandemic, exerting greater pressure on a system already at breaking point.

As a result of these challenges, GPCE has published a [safe working guide](#) to enable practices to prioritise safe patient care, within the present bounds of the GMS contract.

2. BMA GPC Regional Elections

Voting for the GPC regional representative for **Hertfordshire** opened on Thursday 10th March 2022.

The BMA has sent emails to BMA members and non-member GPs (who they have data for) but are keen to increase engagement with GPs in the area for voting.

The candidates running for Hertfordshire GPC regional representative 2022-25 are:

- Dr Violaine Antonia Carpenter
- Dr Nirshanthan Nagarajah

For GPC regional elections, **all** GPs in the Hertfordshire region are eligible to vote, even if you are not BMA members. You do not have to be BMA members but do need a BMA web account to access the election. Please see the below instructions:

To submit your vote for any of the above seats please visit <https://elections.bma.org.uk/>

To vote in this election you must have a BMA web account, if you do not have one please click [here](#) to create one. Please follow the [link](#) to 'request a temporary non-member account' and email your temporary membership number to elections@bma.org.uk to get access to vote in this election.

The deadline for voting is 12pm on Thursday 07th April.

If you have any queries regarding the election process, please contact elections@bma.org.uk.

Please note Bedfordshire will not require any voting as it wasn't a contested election.

3. Estimate of GP Providers NHS Pensionable Profits/Pay

Please note the deadline for the submission of these estimates is **31st March 2022**.

It is usually 1st March but has been moved back this year because all of the systems were not in place to allow for submission by 1st March. For more information about this process please see the [relevant section on the PCSE website](#).

4. Freedom of Information (FOI) - Vexatious Requests

Following reports from several practices in receipt of FOI requests from an organisation called Herts Sovereign Folk, we discussed the issue with Herts CCGs and sought advice from LMC Law. The attached is guidance that will help all practices deal with these and other FOI requests in general.

[LMC guidance regarding FOI vexatious requests](#)

5. GP contract negotiations and future of general practice

As you will probably be aware, despite negotiations between GPC England and NHS England about amendments to the five year contract deal agreed in 2019, [NHS England](#) announced earlier in March that the contract amendments will come into effect from 1st April, without an agreement or endorsement by the BMA.

The GPC are bitterly disappointed with these changes to the GP contract, which they believe fail to help patients and support practices at this critical time.

The negotiations reached a stalemate in mid-February when it became clear that NHS England would not be offering an update that would impact meaningfully on patient care, nor provide the support desperately required for general practice as it faces unprecedented pressures and pandemic recovery, despite GPC England suggesting a number of solutions to address some of these pressures, enabling practices to support patients.

You can read the full BMA statement [here](#) and the GPC's [response to misleading comments](#) about their involvement in the contract changes.

GP contract 22/23 – guidance for practices

Read the GPC's [guidance about the contract changes](#) to support practices in their decision making and next steps.

6. Meeting with Secretary of State and NHS health care reforms

Last week Dr Farah Jameel, GPC England Chair, attended a meeting with Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, alongside BMA Chair of Council, Dr Chaand Nagpaul. The meeting was an opportunity for the Secretary of State to outline the key themes from his '[Road to Recovery Speech](#)', which he delivered the following day. The BMA response to that speech can be [viewed here](#).

The meeting was also an opportunity for the GPC to raise the case for general practice. In particular they outlined the continued and growing pressures facing the general practice workforce, and also reflected on the mood of the profession in response to the contract announcement from NHSE/I – outlining what [further measures](#) they have been calling for.

7. Policy Exchange report on the future of general practice

Many of you will have seen the [Policy Exchange report of future of general practice](#), which was released last week, supported by the Secretary of State. The report outlined a number of proposed changes to the delivery model of general practice, including the suggestion that the GMS contract could be phased out. The GPC commented "We were pleased to see that the recent report recognises the importance of what GPs and their teams do for their communities, and understands that there are some deep-seated problems that need to be urgently addressed, and begins to articulate some ways to make general practice services sustainable for the future." The BMA will be providing a more detailed critique of this report in the coming weeks. Read the [BMA statement in response](#).

8. Data on the pressures facing general practice

Pressures on general practice such as workforce shortages are still as severe as ever, and this is evident in the latest data from [NHS Digital for the GP workforce](#) in January which shows that there is now the equivalent of 1,608 fewer fully qualified full time GPs than in 2015. This is in addition to the average number of patients each GP is responsible for having increased by around 300 since 2015.

The Institute for Government has produced a [performance tracker for general practice](#) for 2021, which draws together data from various sources on the state of general practice and the challenges facing it in the context of the pandemic. It also addresses some of the challenges to recovery and provides estimates for projected demand, concluding that the largest concern for general practice is the need to increase staff numbers.

The Health Foundation's webpage on [understanding activity in general practice](#) has more up to date figures and in particular provides detailed explanations of the scope, quality and detail of GP appointments data, to show what appointment data can or can't tell us.

The BMA webpage on [pressures in general practice data analysis](#) includes key figures on workforce and appointments that are updated each month, alongside what the BMA has been calling for, for general practice.

9. BMA successfully challenges threatening letters from solicitors

A number of solicitors have been threatening doctors with legal action if the doctor does not provide COVID-19 exemption for the solicitor's clients. The BMA's Medico Legal Committee (MLC) has written to the Solicitor's Regulation Authority (SRA) and has been assured that solicitors should not

be “writing in offensive, threatening or intimidatory ways. And we also do not expect solicitors to pursue matters which they know have no legal merit.”

If doctors receive intimidating letters, please advise your Medical Defence Organisation (MDO) and share a copy with the BMA at info.gpc@bma.org.uk so that the MLC may pursue further via the SRA.

Furthermore, the GPC and the MLC have met with the COVID-19 Exemptions Team at the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). We understand that further guidance on COVID-19 exemptions will be published and this will clarify the role of doctors in providing exemption certificates, make it clear what conditions do and do not warrant an exemption, and reiterate that there is no appeal.

The BMA has asked for departmental support that any legal action is against the policy, and thus the DHSC, and not the GP/surgery. The BMA hopes to see a swift and satisfactory conclusion to this matter.

10. NHSPS service charges dispute update - trial dates

The BMA is supporting five test claimant GP practices who have received demands from NHS Property Services (NHSPS) to pay inflated service charges based on its “full cost recovery” approach, outlined in NHSPS’ Consolidated Charging Policy (‘the Policy’). These court proceedings were brought against NHSPS for a declaration that the Policy does not form part of their tenancy and therefore NHSPS cannot base their charges on it.

The trial will begin on 17th March 2022 and will be concluded no later than 5th April 2022.

The [Lawyer magazine](#) has selected the case as one of the top 20 cases to watch in 2022. The case was pursued because of its national significance and has required a huge amount of time and effort from everyone involved, and it is good to see this being recognised. This is a good example of a grassroots issue that is being supported by the BMA at considerable risk and costs. Irrespective of the final outcome this case shows that the BMA is prepared to support doctors in difficult circumstances. Read the [statement from BMA’s legal team](#) at Capital Law.

11. Kings Fund report on Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS)

The King’s Fund has published a major [report on the ARRS](#), which focuses on four roles — social prescribing link workers; first contact physiotherapists; paramedics and pharmacists — to examine the issues related to the implementation of these roles, looking at the experiences of working in these roles and of the people managing them.

The report found a lack of shared understanding about the purpose or potential contribution of the roles, combined with an overall ambiguity about what multidisciplinary working would mean for GPs. It also found that successful implementation of the scheme requires extensive cultural, organisational and leadership development skills that are not easily accessible to PCNs.

12. Guidance for 2022/23 seasonal flu vaccination programme

NHS England has published [guidance on the recommended vaccines and eligible cohorts for the 2022/23 seasonal flu vaccination programme](#).

The guidance highlights that in 2022/23, the NHS flu vaccination programme will only be offered to patient groups eligible in line with pre-pandemic recommendations. This means that 50-64 year olds, and frontline health and social care workers will not be included in the national programme for

the coming year. Practices will therefore need to revert to their previous occupational health arrangements for the vaccination of practice staff.

13. Mandatory vaccinations for healthcare staff to be revoked

The proposed requirement of [mandatory vaccinations](#) for health and social care staff, which was supposed to come into force in England on 1st April, will be [revoked on 15th March 2022](#).

If you have been affected by this issue, please contact the BMA's [employment advisers](#).

News - For the latest news, information and weekly updates for practices, please visit the [Hot Topics](#) section of our website.

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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