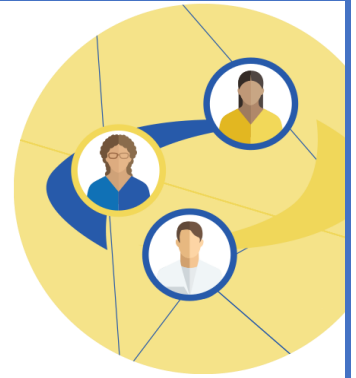


Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire LMC Ltd: Update for Practices, Monday 12th February 2024



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1. GP contract 2024/25

Here is the update from GPCE regarding the GP contract 2024/25 negotiations:

[‘GPC England has rejected the formal contract’](#) from the DHSC and NHS England (NHSE) for the General Medical Services (GMS) contract for 2024-25.

After consideration at its meeting on the 01st February 2024, the committee unanimously voted that the current proposal, including a 1.9% uplift, is unacceptable. The committee was clear that in order to prevent practices from reducing services or closing down altogether, a contractual uplift sufficient to keep practice finances stable for the ‘stepping-stone’ contract year ahead is imperative. The proposal as it presently stands ignores the compelling evidence presented by the BMA GPC England officer team, which quantifies the attrition in the item of service fees for vaccs and imms; the reimbursements eligible under the SFE and the contract value since 2019. A contractual uplift of 1.9% to the global sum would also be disastrous for the employees of practices, including salaried and locum GPs and GP nurses.

Details of the contract come at a time when a BMA survey of 10% of practices in England found almost two in three (64%) report being concerned about their short and long-term viability, and more than half (57%) have experienced cashflow issues within the last 12 months. We had estimated that up to one in four GP surgeries would need to reduce their services to ensure they can remain open for patients, yet this was before this year’s derisory contract position and proposed below inflation funding uplift. GPC England was unanimous in providing us with a mandate to return to the DHSC, NHSE and ministers in Government to continue urgent talks ahead of a final position, which the profession will be asked to vote upon, in a referendum next month.

We’ve said from the beginning, our door will always be open to ministers and their teams. We’re willing to do all in our power to find a solution. As such, GPCE officers will now seek further discussions with the Government and NHS England to improve the GP contract to bring back hope, safety and stability to all GP practices across England.

Referendum and next steps

We have produced a [webpage](#) with everything you need to know about the current GP contract changes and what we plan to do next. Remember, whatever is on the table come March 01st will be

put to you in a referendum which will enable the profession to decide whether the offer sufficiently supports general practice in England for the forthcoming financial year, or not.

To be eligible to vote in the referendum, you need to be a member of the BMA to have your say. This means making sure your details are up to date and spreading the word to colleagues about joining the BMA. The referendum won't prevent the Government from imposing changes to the contract, but it will give us vital insight into how the profession feels, and where we go next.

Update your member details on [BMA - Sign In](#) and share this email with your colleagues and encourage them to [join the BMA today](#) to have your say. [Visit our GP contract page here.](#)'

2. Pharmacy First

On the 31st January, NHS England launched the [Pharmacy First initiative](#), whereby patients in England will be able to get treatment for seven common conditions at their high street pharmacy without needing to see a GP.

GPCE states: 'Community pharmacists can play an important role in delivering non-urgent basic care, which in theory can help reduce our incredibly busy workload as GPs. However, there are concerns that this scheme is being rolled out too quickly, and will rely on an inadequate IT infrastructure that will ultimately increase the administrative burden on practices, not lessen it. With almost 2,000 fewer fully qualified, full-time GPs than in 2015, this will put further pressure on a system already close to breaking point. What patients want, and have always wanted, is the ability to access what they need from their local practice in a timely manner, and this must remain a priority. This remains in the Government's gift; we urge them to allow existing ringfenced funds, currently used to employ non-medical practitioners, to be used more flexibly so that practices can hire more GPs and nurses who are ideally placed to manage simple conditions.'

3. GPCE letter to NHSE regarding the Measles outbreak

[GPC England have written to NHS England](#) highlighting their serious concerns around the current Measles outbreak and the need for urgent support and resources in general practice.

GPCE commented: 'The [communications from NHSE](#) and UKHSA show the lack of accompanying infrastructure, planning and resources to help address the outbreak within general practice. We have explained how the increase in workload generated by patient queries, requests for vaccination history cross-checking, and unresourced catch-up vaccination clinics seriously risks impacting upon practice service delivery. We reiterated our request and belief that lowering the thresholds for vaccination QOF payments would enable greater coverage, rather than the current financially punitive approach that is in place. We have requested an NHSE-mandated urgent rollout of time-limited packages of support for ICBs, and a Measles Vaccination Enhanced Service. The enhanced service would also cover the inherent costs to set-up and staff necessary clinics to limit the impact on normal day-to-day care.'

The letter was also shared in a meeting with the parliamentary under-secretary for primary care, Andrea Leadsom.

4. NHS Jewish BRCA Testing Programme

The [NHS Jewish BRCA Programme](#) launched on the 31st January. The programme provides genetic

testing for BRCA1/2 for people with Jewish ancestry (defined as having at least one Jewish grandparent), who are six times more likely to be a BRCA carrier than the general population.

If anyone presents to their GP with questions, they should be given the link to the information page where they can register for a test, and advised they can call the genetic counselling hotline directly for support on 020 3437 6001.

5. 22/23 End of Year Pensions process webinars

The revised dates for the PCSE 22/23 End of Year Pensions process webinars, covering how to submit Type 1 Annual Certificates and Type 2 Self Assessments, are as follows:

- Type 1 Annual Certificates – Tuesday 20th February, 6.00 – 7.30pm
- Type 2 Self-Assessment forms – Wednesday 21st February, 6.00 – 7.30pm
- Type 1 Annual Certificates – Tuesday 12th March, 6.00 – 7.30pm
- Type 2 Self-Assessment forms – Wednesday 13th March, 6.00 – 7.30pm
- Type 2 Self-Assessment forms – Tuesday 26th March, 6.00 – 7.30pm

Full information about the changes to 2022/23 forms and how to register for the webinars can be found [here](#). The revised submission deadline for this year is the 31st March 2024.

6. Access to records – ICO response to DPIAs

Following DPIAs being submitted by many practices relating to the accelerated access to records programme, this is a reminder that the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) [published its advice last month](#). The ICO is content that 'potential data protection risks have been identified, and that sufficient mitigations are in place.' Practices that haven't completed a DPIA are encouraged to do so and make their commissioners aware. If practices identify particular data protection risks associated with providing online access, which they do not consider to be mitigated, they should consult and engage with the ICO and their commissioner to find a way forward.

GPCE comments that: 'The ICO is technically correct that in theory, a practice could expend whatever infinite resource it wished in order to comply with the contractual requirement to give access. Because a practice could theoretically mitigate (at enormous cost) the ICO is content that the Data Protection Act will not be broken. It's what the ICO has not said which is telling. Reading between these lines, one may infer that if mitigations were not in place (i.e. access was blanket switched-on, as may have happened in many cases) there may be questions over the legality. **Hence the BMA's advice is that as a practice you must still construct a DPIA and keep your commissioners updated. If you are facing local issues, let us know and be sure to include your LMC in such discussions.'**

7. COVID-19 vaccination programme update

NHS England have published an [extension to the COVID vaccination service specification](#) ahead of the proposed spring/summer booster programme. The specification remains mostly unchanged from the current Autumn/Winter programme, however, following discussions with GPC England, there will be an additional £2.50 payment per vaccination for vaccinations from April–August 2024, in addition to the £7.54 Item of Service fee. Whilst this move is welcome, GPCE retain strong concerns about the future financial viability of the programme, and again recommend that practices and their partners make a full assessment of whether delivery of the vaccination programme remains viable for them.

8. Level 3 Children and Adult Safeguarding Webinars in Herts & West Essex

For Herts Practices

Beds & Herts LMC and Herts & West Essex ICB invite primary care colleagues in Hertfordshire and West Essex to the following FREE Safeguarding webinar, contributing to Level 3 training requirements.

Session B:

Agenda:

- Hertfordshire IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy) Service
- Court Appearances, presented by Dr Olive Hayes, Consultant Community Paediatrician East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust & Designated Doctor for Safeguarding Children, Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB.

Date & time:

- Wednesday 28th February 2024, 1.30 - 4.00pm

[Register your free place here](#)

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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