



Update from the Consortium of Lancashire & Cumbria LMCs

Tuesday 12th April 2022

Changes to COVID-19 testing for health and social care staff

The BMA has welcomed that the [changes to COVID-19 testing](#), advising that healthcare workers should continue to test twice a week, whether or not they have symptoms, and that Ministers have abandoned plans to scrap testing for healthcare workers altogether from 1 April.

Lateral flow tests will continue to be available through the gov.uk portal for NHS staff working in a patient-facing role, who are symptomatic. NHSE is working with UKHSA to determine how routine asymptomatic testing should be stepped down in line with any decrease in prevalence rates.

Read the BMA statement in response [here](#)

The [Infection Prevention Control](#) (IPC) guidance for healthcare workers remain in place and face masks should continue to be worn by staff and patients in health care settings.

Download the BMA updated [poster about using face coverings in practices](#).

GP contract and safe working guidance

General practice is under increasing pressure, and the BMA GPC have recently published a [safe working guide](#) to enable practices to prioritise safe patient care, within the present bounds of the GMS contract. We have now added some videos to our resources directing practices to the safest way to continue deliver patient care.

Following the [announcement of the GP contract changes](#) for 2022/23, which came into effect from 1 April, BMA GPC have published an [explainer video](#) explaining what this will mean for practices.

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

All the 2022/23 contractual documentation have now been published on the [NHSEI website](#)

Gender dysphoria guidance

The BMA have updated their guidance on [managing patients with gender dysphoria](#), to include some advice in relation to Gender Identity Clinics asking GPs to review patients who had already been referred to the GIC, due to long waiting time.

Guidance also explains the role of GPs managing patients with gender identity problems, including questions relating to patient records, confidentiality, prescribing and monitoring responsibilities.

Alongside the updated guidance, the BMA have also published a [statement](#) about the need for NHSE to commission gender identity services.

It is also recommend that the guidance is read in conjunction with the BMA guidance on [Inclusive care of trans and non-binary patients](#), which explains first steps and best practice in providing a supportive service to transgender, trans and non-binary patients, including patients who present with gender incongruence and/or dysphoria.





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DWP change to fit note – from 6 April 2022

DWP have changed regulations so that fit notes do not require a signature in ink to authorise them. Instead, a new template is being delivered that is authorised by the name of the doctor being included in the form. This means fit notes can be completed, authorised and sent digitally from 6 April. The main points:

- GPs names will be automatically captured by their IT systems from their user login
- The exact date the system will be updated depends on your system supplier
- Until the new template is delivered, continue to use the current version, which still requires a signature in ink to be valid
- Until the systems are fully updated both the previous and new versions are legally compliant and employers have been told they must accept both
- If patients are not able to receive the fit note digitally or require a paper copy, then this must be provided (but does not require an ink signature)
- If there are issues then the form can still be completed by hand and authorised by the doctor writing their name, or signing the fit note in the relevant place and will still be legally compliant
- Hospitals will still be using paper fit notes ordered from DWP, but from 6 April this should be on the new template

Read more about these changes on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

Health and Social Care Bill

Important changes to the Health and Care Bill by the House of Lords were put to MPs for their approval. [The BMA briefed](#) MPs in advance of the debate, and [provided members with tools](#) to contact their constituency MP directly about the importance of upholding measures around accountability for safe staffing and more.

Whilst MPs [successfully used a free vote](#) to make telemedicine abortion a permanent service in England, the Government's majority sabotaged crucial improvements to the Bill on workforce and service configurations – more on this [can be read about in the BMA reaction on the night](#).

On the Bill's return to the House of Lords last week, however, with BMA support, Peers have pushed back and voted to add the workforce reporting duty back into the Bill in a slightly amended form. [The BMA have welcomed](#) this outcome and will be doing all they can to urge MPs not to overturn it again when it is put to them for consideration later in April, including urging members to keep contacting their MP ([email](#) or [tweet](#)) about the importance of tackling unsafe staffing in legislation.

British Social Attitudes Survey

An [analysis](#) by the King's Fund and the Nuffield Trust Public of the [British Social Attitudes Survey](#) has shown the lowest NHS satisfaction rating in 25 years, and more people (41%) are now dissatisfied with the NHS than satisfied.

Read the [BMA's response to the survey here](#)





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Ukraine refugees

Ukrainians arriving in England will be able to access NHS healthcare **free of charge**, they will be offered COVID-19 vaccines and medical screenings. Information on how to access health services is part of a cross government welcome pack, which is due to be published shortly. Equally all new patients are entitled to a new patient consultation to check their health needs as appropriate.

In addition to the [Existing advice and guidance on health needs of migrants from Ukraine](#) there is specific [primary care guidance here](#). The World Health Organisation has also published [translated health information](#), in English and Ukrainian, on how the NHS works which may be useful.

NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme

NHS Pensions are winding down the [NHS and Social Care Coronavirus Life Assurance Scheme \(CLAS\)](#), due to the decrease of deaths of NHS and social care staff, and the success of the coronavirus vaccine programme, from the end of 31 March 2022.

There will be a further 12-month window to 31 March 2023 to allow families time to bring forward outstanding claims in respect of deaths which occurred whilst the scheme was open. Any practices who know of a health worker who has sadly died, should direct families affected to this scheme.

Diversity and inclusivity training

If an employer is subject to any discrimination claim at an Employment Tribunal a key element of a robust defence can be that the employer had taken all reasonable steps to prevent discrimination. Effective training would represent an important part of that defence and e-learning packages can be an efficient and effective way of delivering that training. Therefore, to complement the training that is already offered to Practices through the LMC, our HR legal advisors, Freeths, have developed, and are able to offer, a Diversity and Inclusion e-learning package that can be delivered to all employees as part of their initial induction training as new employees, and also to refresh and update learning on Diversity and Inclusion for existing employees.

The topics that are covered in the course include:

Module 1: Equality, diversity and inclusion and why it matters

Module 2: The Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics

Module 3: Prohibited conduct: Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation

Module 4: Creating an inclusive workplace - being an ally and effective interventions.

Practices can access the course through the LMC at an annual subscription of £750+VAT. The price is based on a banding for between 1-250 employees, therefore, better suited to a PCN footprint.

You can view a short video on the key features of the course on [YouTube here](#). If you would like a demonstration of the course or further information about how to obtain the course for your practice, please get in touch with LMC HR Service Lead, [Stevie](#), and she will put you in touch with Freeths.

