



Update from the Consortium of Lancashire & Cumbria LMCs

Monday 24th August 2020

NHS Property Service legal action

As you may know, the BMA is supporting five GP practices who have started court proceedings against NHS Property Services (NHSPS) to clarify the basis on which NHSPS calculates service charges. The

You can read more about the case and the BMA's position in the [attached letter](#) to practices.

Infection prevention and control guidance

Public Health England and the equivalent organisations in the devolved nations have now published [Guidance for the remobilisation of services within health and care settings](#) which sets out infection prevention and control recommendations. It re-emphasises that, where possible, services should continue to utilise virtual consultations and classifies general practice physical consultations as medium risk. PPE should, therefore, continue to be worn for all face-to-face contacts.

The guidance advises that for vaccination clinics, where contact with individuals is minimal, the need for single use PPE items for each encounter is not necessary and staff administering vaccinations must apply hand hygiene between patients and wear a sessional facemask. More guidance relating specifically to the flu campaign will be issued shortly.

In response to the publication of the guidance Dr Richard Vautrey, Chair of the BMA GPC, said: 'At the beginning of the Covid crisis, many practices were forced to buy their own PPE or rely on donations from local schools and businesses, such was the woeful system of accessing supplies. We absolutely cannot afford a repeat of this as we seek to see more patients face-to-face, and especially as we deliver the biggest flu vaccination programme in recent history. GPs and their teams are resourceful, but this should not be relied upon as an excuse for not providing practices with the equipment they need to protect staff, and at a time when their priority, as always, should be on providing care for their patients.'

The BMA has now updated its [guidance on PPE for doctors](#).

Flu vaccination services and registration with CQC

CQC have put together new guidance to help practices understand whether they will need to make any changes to their current registration if they are delivering a flu vaccination service in a potentially different way than usual due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For further information, please see the link [here](#).

BMA analysis of NHS England - phase three of the response to COVID-19

Following [NHS England's letter announcing the start of Phase Three of its response to COVID-19](#), the BMA has produced an analysis, which can be read [here](#), outlining what this means for doctors and for the health service.





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DVLA requests

It has come to our attention that GP surgeries are starting to see requests from patients for GPs to document that they are fit to drive under section 88 of the Road Traffic Act. This has been raised nationally to the BMA Professional Fees Committee who are challenging DVLA directly. It is not a GP responsibility to provide an opinion on fitness to drive in these circumstances - to do so would fall outside of CNSGP arrangements and could also cause doctor/patient relationship breakdown, if the opinion is perceived as adverse. We will keep you updated.

GMC fees and maternity leave

The aim of the GMC's [income discount scheme](#) is to assist doctors whose overall financial circumstances makes it more difficult for them to afford the full annual fee. However, some doctors may miss out on the discount if their period of maternity spans two registration years, with the result that their income does not fall below the threshold in either year. BMA GPC challenged the GMC about this and following intervention they will be undertaking a review of their discount scheme, as it recognises the need to allow all women on maternity leave (irrespective of the time of year their baby is born) to access a discount if their income falls below the threshold while they are on maternity leave.

In the meantime, the GMC will offer doctors a discount if they expect their income to be below the £32,000 threshold during a 12-month period that overlaps with their period of maternity leave. This discount is available for one registration year, so doctors will need to indicate on [the income discount application form](#) which year they would like the discount to be applied to.

The GMC will be updating its information to reflect this interim change – for further information please contact the GMC directly (contact details are on the [income discount application form](#)).

Tracker survey shows doctors have little confidence that wider NHS services can manage demand

Whilst practices are reporting that workload levels have returned to previous levels, if not greater, the latest [COVID-19 BMA tracker survey](#) has shown that the majority of doctors in primary and secondary care have little to no confidence the wider health service will be in a position to resume a normal level of service before the end of this year, which reflects on the enormity of the backlog of care following the first peak of COVID-19.

Read more about the survey and outcomes [here](#).

New restrictions on stimulant laxatives to counter risks from overuse

The [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency \(MHRA\)](#) will be adding extra label warnings to new packs of stimulant laxatives to reduce abuse and overuse, and to make it clear that they do not help with weight loss and can lead to damage to the digestive system. Instead, patients should be encouraged to use alternatives, such as diet and lifestyle changes, or potentially switch to other products such as bulk laxatives.





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Mask exemption letters for air travel

BMA GPC are aware of some airlines that are still asking for letters from GPs for mask exemption. To restate previous guidance, this is not required as per the [government advice on exemption cards](#), which states: 'Those who have an age, health or disability reason for not wearing a face covering should not be routinely asked to give any written evidence of this, this includes exemption cards. No person needs to seek advice or request a letter from a medical professional about their reason for not wearing a face covering. Some people may feel more comfortable showing something that says they do not have to wear a face covering. This could be in the form of an exemption card, badge or even a home-made sign. This is a personal choice and is not necessary in law.'

New National Institute for Health Protection

The Government has announced the [creation of a new National Institute for Health Protection \(NIHP\)](#) with immediate effect, whose primary focus is public health protection and infectious disease capability, and with a single command structure to advance the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will bring together Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace, as well as the analytical capability of the Joint Biosecurity Centre under a single leadership team.

Read the full BMA statement [here](#)

Impact on practices of the government lifting the cap on medical school places

The government confirmed that it would be lifting the cap on the number of places to study medicine, in light of the issues around A-level grading, after the BMA called for universities to honour all earlier offers. The BMA had urged medical schools to review the applications of those who were earlier denied places due to the unfair grading process.

Due to the shortage of doctors in primary care, it is essential that an increase in intake to medical school is followed up with support and funding both for medical schools and GP practices, particularly to provide greater opportunities for practice-based training for medical students. While the BMA is pleased that the undergraduate tariff has recently been increased for placements in general practice, more can be done to distribute this funding and offer support for Practices to enhance the undergraduate general practice experience for medical students. Read the BMA's response to earlier reports on lifting the cap [here](#).

Registering patients prior to their release from secure residential estate

Practices have a contractual obligation as set out in the [NHS England Standard General Medical Services \(GMS\) Contract 2017/18](#) (page 64) to support with registering patients prior to their release from the secure residential estate. Practices are asked to ensure that processes are in place to support this, with information on how to do this [here](#). Plans are also progressing to enable patients to register with a GP in their place of detention in the same way as they register with a community GP. This change will enable a patient's general practice record to transfer to their place of detention, allowing clinicians working in these settings full access to the individual's medical record and history. This will be rolled out next year in a phased approach across England. BMA guidance will be updated to reflect this clarification and we will circulate this as soon as it is released.

