



Update from the Consortium of Lancashire & Cumbria LMCs

Monday 6th April 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update

GP COVID-19 preparedness update

GPC England has published a [GP preparedness guide](#) to help practices to safely support delivery of health care within the current extremely challenging and pressurised environment. They have set out four key principles to work towards:

- Health Care Worker safety is paramount
- By protecting health care workers, patients are protected
- Do everything possible to reduce infection transmission
- Procedures and pathways should be evidence based

The guidance includes advice on proactive care, repeat prescribing, workforce planning, PPE, death certification and cremation forms.

Identifying high risk patients

As reported in the Brieflet last week, the [CMO has published a letter defining those](#) at high risk of contracting COVID-19, which communicated a need for General Practice to identify and write to group 4 patients. NHSEI has published [guidance and FAQs for clinicians and patients on caring for people at highest risk of contracting COVID-19](#).

The BMA also published joint guidance with the [Royal College of GPs on Vulnerable Patients – Role of General Practice during COVID19](#), which has now been withdrawn pending an update on the process for identifying and contacting patients in Group 4 (other high risk patients with complex/ severe multimorbidity). The letter sent to practices from the CMO and NHSE Medical Director on 21 March asked you to identify additional patients who may be known to your practice as being at highest clinical risk (referred to as Group 4 in that letter). NHSEI are now advising that you disregard this and refer to the most recent advice provided.

PPE update

As the BMA has made clear daily through their public campaigning, media work and political lobbying, there has been a serious problem with sufficient supply of appropriate PPE. The BMA has also called for clarity from the Government on what healthcare staff should do if they do not have adequate PPE. The BMA GPC have been working hard to resolve this with NHSE and the Government. Dr Richard Vautrey, Chair of the BMA GPC, has raised this repeatedly with the Health Minister. He said that whilst the change secured to PHE's PPE guidance on eye protection was an important step forward, this now must be followed up with the urgent delivery of equipment to practices. There was also still a need to give greater confidence to the profession, particularly relating to the difference between disposable aprons and gowns. He also told the Health Minister of the feedback received from LMCs about the continuing supply issues and the need for this still to be properly resolved as a matter of urgency.





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As a result of this pressure the BMA GPC have finally secured some action in delivering PPE to practices and the messaging on the National Supply Disruption Service (NSDR) helpline has now changed. Additional stock, following the initial delivery a few weeks ago, has been placed with distributors and wholesalers to enable GP practices to order through their normal routes, and is now starting to be delivered to practices, although still not in enough quantities that practices need.

The BMA are aware that a number of companies producing visors and many practices have received support from local bodies, [schools](#) and charities. It is important to ensure they are of sufficient quality. It is essential that all those having direct face to face consultations with patients wear appropriate eye protection. The BMA GPC are now pushing for NHSEI to provide these to every practice.

PPE requirements for primary and community care

The BMA GPC have been repeatedly raising the widely held concern about PHEs PPE guidance. They have been working with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and others to encourage PHE and the UK Chief Medical Officers to bring the UK guidance in line with [WHO standards](#). As a result of pressure [new Public Health England PPE guidance](#) has now been published and includes advice for primary and community care providers. It is now clear that in primary care PPE should include eye protection and PPE should be worn for all contacts. The Government have been called on to ensure rapid delivery of eye protection to all practices and they have committed to do this. All patients must be assumed to have COVID-19 and it is now recommended that they should wear a mask during any face-to-face consultation. In addition, scrupulous hand hygiene is vital for self-protection and Dr David Farren, a consultant in infection control, has produced [guidance](#) on this.

Testing

Following the announcement by the Government about testing HCWs: the NHSEI [letter to CCGs about COVID-19 testing to support retention of NHS staff](#) advises that in the first instance, staff in initial priority groups such as critical care, EDs and ambulance services, who are unable to work will be tested. This will then be rolled out more widely. Read the BMA statement [here](#).

Models of working

In some areas, PCNs are proposing to or have already set up COVID hubs to be the premises at which necessary face to face consultations take place. This is for each locality to determine, however, with the rapid spread of this infection it should be assumed that all patients have potential COVID-19 infection, and [remote consultation methods](#) should be prioritised, reducing to an absolute minimum direct physical examination. Patients with serious illness when clinically appropriate should be referred directly to secondary care after telephone or video assessment and those more appropriately managed in the community may require home visits with full PPE.

Easter opening hours

The [emergency changes to GMS contract regulations](#) requires practices to be open on Good Friday and Easter Monday, as it is expected that this bank holiday period will coincide with a peak in activity





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in many parts of the country. Funding arrangements have not yet been made for this, although NHSE/I have committed that practices will not suffer financial detriment as a result of opening each day. Dr Richard Vautrey has been clear that it is [necessary](#) to support practices properly. More information will be provided as soon as possible.

The LMC sent out HR guidance last week regarding working arrangements for the upcoming bank holidays. If you would like to see this guidance please visit our [website](#).

Death certification and cremation guidance

Following the introduction of [Coronavirus Act 2020](#), new measures have come in to manage and ease the processes around death certification and cremation. [NHS guidance](#) has now been published – this can also be found on the BMA [death certification webpage](#) alongside other relevant guidance.

Remote review of long-term conditions

Although QOF is suspended it remains important where capacity and priorities allow to support patients with long term conditions. The BMA have produced a short guide, [attached to this email](#), to manage long-term conditions using remote consultations - with thanks to Tom Yerburgh, a member of the GPC clinical and prescribing policy group.

Contract changes

Annual contract changes were made on 1 April. Whilst most of the requirements have been suspended, funding guarantees have been provided. [Read the BMA guidance for practices](#).

Primary Care Network DES guidance

The revised [PCN DES](#) commenced on 1 April 2020. Given that the climate and the pressures have changed significantly since the original specifications were agreed, the focus of the PCN DES is now to mainly support practices to increase their workforce and deal with the national emergency of coronavirus (COVID-19) and [many elements of the DES have been suspended](#). GPC England has produced this short guidance to support practices to work together locally by navigating the DES in a straightforward manner. Read the guidance [here](#)

Retired doctors returning to work

Following the roll-out of [temporary registration by GMC for newly retired doctors](#), in order to return to work individuals will need to complete identification and right to work verification. NHSEI and the Home Office have confirmed that this can be done remotely by using a video link and there is no need to do this via practices. See more information on the [COVID Clinical Assessment Service website](#).

The BMA have also published [guidance for Retired GP Returning to Practice which is attached](#). Thanks to Dr Nigel Watson who is one of the first GPs returning to practice and for his help with this.





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Death in Service benefit

BMA Chair, Dr Chaand Nagpaul, has written to Chancellor Rishi Sunak, urging the Treasury to extend Death in Service benefit to all NHS workers, including retired staff who have returned to the service. The Chair called for the immediate progress on this issue, stating the benefit will provide reassurance to those 'doing their very best during this crisis'. Read the BMA statement [here](#).

The BMA are working with NHSEI on arrangements for locum GPs to be able to be employed as single lead employer and, therefore, enable death in service benefits if they are part of pension scheme. Details should be produced this week.

Dispensing Practices

We are aware that around the country there are some dispensing practices experiencing cash flow problems due to the current COVID19 crisis. This is due to a surge in ordering and the timing between ordering drugs and the payment for them (3 months later). In similar vein, practices are having to request additional sessions, buy data packages, find ways to support staff as they work long days. These issues have been raised on a national stage and we will keep practices informed about any developments.

Tier 2 visas

The Government has announced that Doctors, nurses and paramedics with visas due to expire before 1 October 2020 will have them automatically extended for one year. Read more [here](#)

Wellbeing

At times of crisis it is also vital that we all look after our emotional as well as physical health and the BMA has a range of [wellbeing services](#) including 24/7 counselling, available to ALL doctors and medical students (not just BMA members).

The LMC also have the GP Support Scheme which is a free and confidential peer support service for all GPs across Lancashire and Cumbria. Please get in touch with [Maria](#) for more information.

Other COVID 19 resources

- [BMJ – news and resources](#)
- [RCGP COVID-19 information](#)
- [NHSE/I daily primary care bulletins on COVID-19](#)
- [Latest NHSEI preparedness letter](#)
- [NHSE/I COVID-19 webinars](#)
- [COVID-19 Google Drive resource](#)
- [Primary Care Pathways COVID-19 resource centre](#)
- [NICE resources on COVID-19](#)
- [Information on COVID-19 for social prescribing link workers](#)

