



Update from the Consortium of Lancashire & Cumbria LMCs

Tuesday 31st March 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update

Last week the Prime Minister issued a [statement](#) introducing even [tougher measures on social distancing and said that people 'must stay at home'](#) in order to protect the NHS and save lives, by reducing the spread of the infection. As the [Prime Minister](#) and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care have now both tested positive, the spread of infection is clear. It is more important to use remote methods for consultations to the maximum, to limit face to face contact with patients to the absolute minimum and when only clinically necessary, and to use PPE at all times.

Vulnerable patients and social distancing

Following the announcement introducing new measures on [social distancing](#), advising those at increased risk of severe illness to be particularly stringent, the [CMO has published a letter defining those](#) at high risk which are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition and with particular chronic diseases- i.e. anyone eligible to get a flu immunisation as an adult each year on medical grounds

The BMA have published joint guidance with the RCGP on *Vulnerable Patients – Role of General Practice during COVID19*, which can be accessed [on the RCGP COVID-19 hub page](#).

There are two specific groups of *very high-risk patients* - those in category B (Groups 1-3) will automatically be sent a letter by NHSBS. The CMO letter communicated a need for General Practice to identify and write to group 4 patients. However, guidance will be published imminently as to how these group 4 patients will be communicated with.

There has been some confusion around the definition of the very high-risk groups. These groups were categorised by the NHSE Clinical Reference Group and other specialist clinicians, into the very high risk patients that could be identified by extracting relevant groups from national datasets using [HES data](#) as this was readily available. NHS Digital are currently working with system suppliers to try and reconcile any inaccurate codes applied.

These patients will have received different texts to the ones going to the general public and they should receive letters directly. Practices should have received lists of their patients in this group and codes will be added to patients' electronic record.

PPE update

The BMA have been very concerned about the lack of appropriate PPE for primary care providers and the problems practices are having in obtaining additional supplies. The BMA are working to resolve this with NHSE and the DHSC urgently. The BMA also [wrote to the PM](#) calling for this to be urgently resolved, as well as demanding that testing be made available for HCWs. [BMA demanded answers](#) about PPE from the Government, and Dr Chaand Nagpaul, BMA Chair of Council, made this [statement](#).





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It is imperative that practices and other primary and community care organisations get regular supplies of PPE and that practitioners are given confidence that the PPE they receive, and use is appropriate. Practices should not need to purchase this themselves.

As a result of the BMA pressure they have secured some action in delivering PPE to practices. The messaging on the helpline has now changed. The National Supply Disruption Response was designed to deal with supply disruption in the event of no-deal Brexit and is now focussed around the distribution of PPE. Additional stock, following the initial delivery a few weeks ago, has been placed with distributors and wholesalers (such as Phoenix/DCC Vital/Williams) to enable GP practices to order through their BAU routes.

NHSEI and DHSC are working with the military to enable swift movement from pandemic stockpiles into distribution centres to fulfil demand.

For more immediate short-term issues NSDR are able to issue 'pre-packed kits' with a minimum of 100 Type IIR facemasks; 100 aprons and 100 pairs of gloves within 72 hours. **Primary care providers who raise requests for kits through NSDR must to be able to make arrangements to receive emergency delivery of these 'pre-packed kits' outside of business hours.** They are focussed on providing swift responses to meet gaps until scheduled deliveries arrive; and until orders with wholesalers through BAU are back up and running. The National Supply Disruption Response 24/7 telephone helpline is [0800 915 9964](tel:08009159964).

There will be an NHS-wide statement on PPE from the CMO to be published imminently.

Retired doctors and returning on performers list

The [GMC](#) wrote to doctors who have retired in the last three years to ask if they would be willing to return to practice to provide support during the pandemic. The BMA wrote [a joint letter](#) with NHSE/I and the RCGP to GPs specifically to let them know how they can help, if they would like to, including letting people know how they can ask to be temporarily registered on the Performers List.

The MDOs have waived their fees for retired doctors returning to work – read more on their websites:

- [Medical Protection](#)
- [Medical Defence Union](#)
- [MDDUS](#)

Remote consultations and homeworking

The BMA has published [guidance to support doctors in any healthcare setting to conduct remote consultations during the pandemic](#). A new [BMJ article on remote consultations](#) provides a helpful summary on how to do these as effectively as possible and underlines the importance of reducing face to face physical consultations to an absolute minimum.

QOF calculations in England 2019/20 and 2020/21

NHSE/I has published a [letter](#) confirming that calculations for QOF 2019/20 will be made as usual, and will be analysed to understand the impact of Covid-19. This letter also committed that NHSE/I will ensure that all GP practices in 2020/21 continue to be paid at the same rates.





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Death certification and cremation

The BMA are liaising with the DHSC to clarify, as quickly as possible, what the new procedures will be following the passing of the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#) for certifying death and cremations. As soon as this information becomes available, we will circulate this to practices. In the meantime, please see attached internal guidance on the changes to cremations from the Ministry of Justice and a letter from the General Register Officer with guidance on the measures.

NHS regulations – amendments relating to primary care during a pandemic

The [NHS Regulations amendments relating to the provision of Primary Care Services during a Pandemic 2020](#) have now been published. The amendments include:

- provision to allow for opening on bank holidays and Easter weekend
- provision to prevent remedial action in the event of a breach
- provision to allow an increased number of bookings from NHS111
- provision for dispensing doctors and pharmacies to delivery medicines to patients

The [Emergency COVID-19 Act](#) has now become law.

You should have received the *GP Preparedness Update letter* which you will find attached. **Regarding the bank holiday preparation section our HR team will be sending out further information this week.** If you have any other queries regarding the letter, please get in touch.

RCOG advice pregnant women working in the NHS

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist has published updated [advice for pregnant women who are working in the NHS during the coronavirus outbreak](#). The updated guidance emphasises that pregnant women of any gestation should be offered the choice of whether to work in direct patient facing roles during the pandemic.

Social Prescribing Link Workers COVID-19 guidance

The National Association of Link Workers, Social Prescribers and General Practice has published guidance regarding what social prescribing link workers should be doing at this time and the support that could be available from them. Read more [here](#)

Preparedness letter for pharmacy

Please see [NHSE/I preparedness letter for community pharmacists](#). This has references to general practice, particularly relating to prescription length.

Medication and specialist advice during the COVID-19 pandemic

UCL Hospital's Medicines Information Service have put together a list of useful links that outline the significant number of guidelines produced to support medication advice for patients. The document is attached.

BMA ethical guidance on COVID-19

The BMA has published ethical guidance on COVID-19 – access it [here](#).





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COVID-19 webpage and guidance

[The BMA COVID-19 webpage](#) is updated daily with guidance and links to official information:

- [PHE guidance for primary care](#)
- [NHS England guidance for primary care](#)

The BMA has published [FAQs on your contract terms and conditions](#) which will be updated regularly. See also the [COVID-19 'update page'](#) with links to BMA priorities, guidance and news.

You can also visit the [LMC hot topics section on our website](#) which includes regular updates on COVID-19 guidance for practices.

Wellbeing

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

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.

The BMA has set up a ['wall of thanks' webpage](#) where the public can send message of gratitude or [donate funds](#) to doctors working tirelessly in response to COVID-19.

Letter of thanks for supermarkets

The BMA is rolling out [care pages and have also written a letter of thanks to the supermarkets](#) across the country for taking steps to ensure NHS staff remain able to access essential goods.

Food Delivery Services

Due to the supply issues some supermarkets have been experiencing we have put together a list (please see attached) of local businesses across Lancashire & Cumbria that are available to deliver your poultry and fresh fruit and vegetables. We have included all relevant details for you to use at your own pace and ensure you are able to reach stock in your area.

Please note the suppliers have been found off the web and there are other takeaways and services available. We do not recommend any delivery services specifically.

