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**19<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Dear Colleagues,

Many of you will be feeling understandably nervous about the challenges that we are to face over the coming months. You may recall that we said this would be a marathon and not a sprint and that has sadly proven to be the case. Let us hope that we are now on the last leg.

As Winter looms and Covid 19 cases rise, many of us are undoubtedly feeling less resilient than we were and I know that many of you are struggling to keep on top of rising workloads, patient expectations and the continual flurry of guidance and instruction. You are not alone in this.

I want to remind you that we are not where we were at the beginning of the pandemic. Our understanding of the virus is far better than it was, and potential vaccines are now within reach. We have better treatments, embedded models of care that we have tried and tested previously and PPE supply is ready and waiting for us and is free! There is excellent wellbeing support available for you when and if you need it.

Some of you have embraced the new ways of working and have found it life changing. However others have found, and continue to find these changes difficult. We will all cope with these unprecedented times differently. What is important is that we come together to support each other in getting through these next months safely and that we find ourselves able to look back knowing that general practice did all that we could to support the patients of Worcestershire and Herefordshire and each other.

The LMC is here for every GP and we will continue to work hard to support, advise and represent you. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

## **New Three Tier Lockdown Approach and BMA Recommendations to Help Reduce Spread of COVID-19**

The rapid rise across the country in the number of people with COVID-19 is already putting a significant strain on general practice services. GPs and their teams have responded incredibly well throughout the pandemic, remaining open, maintaining services and going the extra mile to care for our patients. Recent media reports and briefings suggesting otherwise have not only been wrong but also deeply damaging to the morale of a dedicated and committed workforce. Richard Vautrey made this situation clear in his one-to-one meetings with Sir Simon Stevens and Jo Churchill, the health minister with responsibility for primary care in England, earlier this month, and they both acknowledged the central and important role general practice has played and will play in dealing with the pandemic.

However as practices, out-of-hours providers, PCNs and other GP services do their best to prepare for the difficulties this winter will bring, we expect NHSE/I and government to do far more to support us, and with parts of the country now back where they were in March that support must come urgently.

On Monday, the Government [announced the introduction of a new three-tier \(medium, high, very high\) lockdown approach for England](#). Prior to this, the BMA called for new, stronger measures to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 infection and published a series of [recommendations](#) which could help reduce the level of infection as well as supporting businesses and those who are in vulnerable groups. The BMA recommendations include:

- Modify the current 'Rule of 6' with the rule that only two (exclusive) households can meet (and not exceed 6 people) – ideally outdoors, rather than indoors.
- Making the wearing of face masks mandatory in all offices and working environments, unless you are working alone.
- Wear masks in all outdoor settings where two metre distancing isn't possible.

Read the full set of recommendations [here](#).

## **New Advice for Patients at High Risk of COVID-19 Infection**

Following the announcement of a new three-tier lockdown approach in England, the Department of Health and Social Care published [updated guidance for those considered most clinically vulnerable, depending on the](#)

[level of risk in their local area](#), in line with the new Local COVID Alert Levels framework.

This new guidance provides advice for the clinically vulnerable to follow in addition to the new rules and guidance for everyone based on the level of risk in their local area. The government are not yet suggesting the reintroduction of shielding arrangements that were paused in the summer. More restrictive 'shielding' measures could be considered in the future in areas facing the highest risk and if that happens the Government will write to relevant people separately to inform them directly should they be advised to shield.

Read more in the BMA's [updated guidance for patient at high risk](#).

### **General Practice "Green Fund"**

GPC have written the attached [letter](#) to Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Prevention, Public Health and Primary Care, Jo Churchill MP, this week to request support for primary care to meet net zero carbon emissions.

At a time when our primary focus is on responding to the massive challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot forget and must do more as a country to reduce the serious impact of climate change. The NHS, including general practice, can play a role in this. They have therefore called on the Minister to back the recommendation for a general practice 'Green Fund' to enable GPs to put in place more sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. They have also called for an extension of arrangements in place during the pandemic such as promoting use of technology, labelling medicines to allow for carbon footprint tracking and continuing the ability to make use of previously prescribed but unused medicines to reduce waste.

### **Complaints (KO41b form) Data Collection for 2019/20**

Following active lobbying for a reduction in bureaucracy impacting practices, and particularly in light of the current pressures that general practice face in responding to COVID-19, NHS Digital have confirmed that the annual complaints (KO41b form) data collection relating to 2019/20 will not be collected as usual. Practices are instead encouraged to continue to use the information collected locally for local service improvement purposes. Read more [here](#).

### **Primary Care Representation on ICS Boards**

Chandra Kanneganti, GPC policy lead for commissioning and service development, and Richard Vautrey have written to to Ian Dodge, National Director at NHS England and NHS Improvement, with responsibility for Primary

Care, to urge him to issue guidance to all ICSs (integrated care systems) stressing the importance of primary care provider representation on their boards and other decision-making bodies.

In some local systems, only GPs employed from CCGs are representing primary care at ICS level and LMCs are not as involved as they ought to be. While those GPs are an important voice in terms of representing commissioners, they cannot be seen as the representative of primary care as providers. The BMA believes that LMCs, which are the local representative voice of general practice and PCNs, should also form part of the leadership team of ICSs and 'have a seat at the table'. See the [letter](#) attached.

### **CQC State of Care Annual Report**

The [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) state of care report](#) for 2019/20 was published last week. The report showed that before COVID-19, care was generally good. In primary care, the overall ratings picture remained almost unchanged, with excellent ratings of 89% of GP practices rated good and 5% outstanding. They did though suggest that this masked a more varied picture, with some practices deteriorating and a similar number improving.

LMCs and GPC continue to call for CQC inspections to be suspended for the duration of the pandemic and do not believe their transitional regulatory approach is appropriate or necessary at this time.

## **WORCESTERSHIRE ISSUES**

### **LARCS PAYMENTS**

We can confirm that Worcestershire Health and Care Trust have committed to maintaining income for practices for LARC procedures until the end of September. This will be an activity based payment from October and the Health and Care Trust will be communicating this to practices shortly. They had originally proposed to end the payment protection from the end of August which we have challenged on the basis that practices were not informed.

We have also been in discussion with our CCG around protection of income for some enhanced services which have had to be suspended in light of Covid related restrictions on certain procedures. We have asked for a clear message on payments arrangements to be sent to practices which you should have received recently. We believe the approach now taken is a fair one and should provide some additional financial security for practices. As local alert levels change there will be further discussions around funding and we will aim to ensure that practices can maintain their income wherever possible.

## **Wellbeing**

We are fortunate to have excellent mental health support in place for general practice locally across both our counties. Do please access support if you need it and remember that it is very hard to look after others if you are not looking after yourself! The latest support available can be found on our [website](#).

## **Mentor Support**

Please find a flyer highlighting how you can access peer support during this time [here](#). More information about [wellbeing](#) support can be found on the LMC website.

## **BMA Mental Health and Wellbeing**

The BMA continues to offer [wellbeing services](#) and confidential 24/7 counselling and peer support for all doctors and medical students, as well as their partners and dependents, on 0330 123 1245. Access the [BMA's COVID-19 wellbeing pages here](#).

There are two NHS Practitioner Health webinars next week focused on wellbeing: [Beating burnout](#) on Monday 19 October and [Taking a break from COVID-19: how to escape, unwind and reboot](#) on Tuesday 20 October. Read more about these and future events [here](#).

## **LMC Website**

The following guidance has been added to the LMC website [www.worcslmc.co.uk](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk) this week:

[BMA Letter – Sustainability and Environmentally Friendly General Practice](#)  
[BMA – Primary Care Representation ICS](#)

## **Other COVID 19 Resources**

[BMJ – news and resources](#)

[RCGP COVID-19 information](#)

[NHSE/I primary care bulletins](#)

[NICE resources](#)

# WORCESTERSHIRE AND HEREFORDSHIRE LMC LTD

**Registered office: St Stephens Surgery, Adelaide Street, Redditch, Worcs B97 4AL  
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All topical issues relating to local general practice are discussed at the monthly LMC meetings and those minutes can be read on the LMC [Website](#). Should you require further information on any issues raised at the LMC meetings please do not hesitate to contact the LMC representative for your area or practice.

## **MEMBERS OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE COMMITTEE**

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Dr S Morton  
Dr J Rayner

**WYCHAVON:** Dr D Herold  
Dr J Rankin  
Dr R Kinsman

**MALVERN:** Dr P Bunyan  
Dr B Fisher

**WORCESTER:** Dr F Martin  
Dr C Whyte  
Dr R Benney

## **Co-opted Representatives:**

**Out of Hours:** Dr E Penny  
**Dispensing:** Dr J Rankin  
**Registrars Rep:** Dr J Chun (North)  
Dr L Jones (South)  
**First5 Rep:** Dr M Venables

## **Practice Manager Representatives:**

Helen Garfield, Representative WF PM  
Lisa Luke, Representative R&B PM  
Meryl Foster, Representative SW PM

**IT Rep:** Dr R Williams  
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**Clinical Directors:** Rotating  
**BAME:** Dr W Safdar

## **MEMBERS OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE COMMITTEE**

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### **Representatives:**

All 20 practices are represented at Committee Meetings

**Worcestershire and Herefordshire GPC Representative:** Dr S Parkinson

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS PRODUCED FROM THE LMC OFFICE AT  
ST STEPHENS SURGERY**

### **The next LMC meetings will be:**

Worcestershire – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
Herefordshire – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020