

30th November 2020

2020 Conference of England LMCs

The 2020 Conference of England LMC was held on 27 November, as a virtual event.

In Richard Vautrey's opening speech he thanked and commended GPs for having stepped up at this time of national crisis and for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic with such speed and effectiveness. He praised the hard work and diligence of colleagues across primary care over the last nine months, while criticising the Government for being "behind the curve" with delayed guidance, limited initiatives and inadequate funding.

He noted that with a daunting covid vaccination programme facing us there can be no better people to succeed in this task. Once a safe and effective vaccine is available, he acknowledged that practice teams will work to the best of their considerable ability to protect patients as quickly as practically possible. He said that "whilst we may have super-powers we cannot be in two places at once and so we will need the help of everyone, we'll need to be able to prioritise the rest of our workload and crucially we'll need the understanding of our patients in doing so. We will need all hands to the pump."

The resolutions will be published on the [website](#) as soon as possible after the event. They are also attached.

COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Guidance

NHSE/I has published a [letter](#) about the outcome of the general practice site designation process to provide commissioners and practices with more information to help with planning. This follows on from a [letter that NHSE/I sent to NHS Trusts](#) last week, outlining the wider COVID-19 vaccination deployment strategy and operational readiness for mass immunisation sites.

The letter sets out that NHSE/I aims to give all designated sites at least 10 days' notice of the first vaccines becoming available to ensure sites can be prepared and clinics arranged. It also suggests practices may wish to use this opportunity to invite the extended flu vaccination programme cohort of 50-64 year olds to their single designated site, to test arrangements.

In addition, NHSE/I has published [FAQs on their FutureNHS platform](#) (sign in required) based on the information known at present about eligible cohorts, appointment booking, administration of the vaccine, workforce and funding, to help answer any question that practices may have. We also expect that the COVID-19 vaccination programme specifications will be published imminently.

Practices have stepped up to the challenge of putting in place arrangements at an unprecedented speed and should be commended for doing so. It's been vital to be prepared for all possible options and once the regulatory process is complete we will have greater clarity and be able to finalise plans. The difficulties with storing and moving the Pfizer vaccine make the delivery of this particularly challenging. As a result it may be that initial vaccination plans of priority groups including care homes residents and healthcare staff will depend on the specific vaccinations available.

Please see the recent BMA [guidance](#) about the COVID-19 vaccination programme which has FAQs throughout to answer some of the questions that we know practices will have, and they will regularly update it when new information is available.

Public Health England have produced two videos in which Wei Shen, Chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, explains the vaccine prioritisation and the rationale for the age-based approach. The videos can be found on the [Public Health England twitter page](#).

COVID-19 Winter Plan and Exiting Lockdown

Last week, the BMA launched a ['blueprint' for leaving lockdown](#), to help save lives and prevent the collapse of health services this winter, outlining major reforms for England to sustainably control the spread of COVID-19.

Earlier this week, the Prime Minister set out [the COVID-19 winter plan and announced the return to a three-tiered system](#) when England ends lockdown next week on 2 December. He also confirmed that mass testing will be introduced in all England's tier three areas, the highest alert level. In response to this, Chaand Nagpaul, BMA Council Chair, said:

“The Government has had nearly a month to devise a realistic plan to halt the spread of Covid-19, in order to protect people’s health and prevent the NHS facing collapse. Worryingly, the Prime Minister has revealed a plan that is full of risks and threatens to undo the progress and undermine the difficult sacrifices the public have made in that time.

The Prime Minister says the new measures are tougher than October when in reality many are far more relaxed, at a time when infection rates and covid-related hospitalisations and deaths remain high. For doctors and NHS staff who are already working under incredible pressure, the potential impact on NHS services is deeply worrying.”

The full COVID-19 winter plan is available [here](#) and information about the [local restriction tiers](#).

Guidance for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable People

From Wednesday 2 December, once the current national restrictions in England are replaced with a regionally differentiated approach of the country, the government is planning to communicate updated guidance with all c.2.3m people on the Shielded Patient List (SPL) via letter. The government has provided [specific guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable people at each local tier](#). This letter should be published on Saturday 28 November on the [GOV.UK website](#). Letters may start arriving with patients from Saturday 28 November, and throughout all of next week (w/c 30 November).

Integrated Care Systems Consultation

The NHSE/I has published a [consultation](#) inviting comments on the next steps for ICSs (Integrated Care Systems). The consultation raises some fundamental issues about how the NHS will be structured and work in the future and invites a discussion about how ICSs could be embedded in legislation or guidance. It signals an intent to make significant changes to CCGs and move the focus from competition to provider collaboration. The LMC will be carefully considering this and its implications. Read more about the proposals [here](#).

QOF System Suppliers Update

As practices will be aware QOF 2020/21 has been [revised to reflect the impact of COVID-19 on general practice](#). Practices need to reprioritise aspects of care not related to COVID-19 and the QOF requirements have been modified for 2020/21 to support this and to help release capacity in general practice. Practices and commissioners have been asked to work together to confirm that any population stratification is clinically appropriate for their local population.

Clinical system suppliers have recently updated QOF indicators and prompts. In some instances, this may have impacted on practices' records of progress to date. Practices should be reassured that the indicators affected by this update are those that are subject to income protection as outlined in 2020/21 QOF guidance. Practices are not expected to re-code or re-review patients for indicators affected by this system update, unless there is a clinical need to do so.

GP Appointment Data

The latest [appointment data](#) for October was published yesterday. There were nearly 1.6 million more appointments in October than September, and October also had the highest number of appointments of any month in 2020 (28,236,193), and the highest since October 2019. There were 1.8million more face-to-face appointments in October than September and the highest number since February.

This data continues to show that general practice remains open and is delivering a high number of appointments during the second wave of the pandemic.

Government Spending Review

This week, the Chancellor announced funding plans for the NHS during his spending review speech. The announcements fall short of what is needed to improve GP practices/estates and expand the GP workforce. Read the BMA briefing on the [announcements](#).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

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](#).

The BMA has welcomed the NHSE/I [announcement](#) of further funding for the expanded and rapid access provision of mental health services for NHS staff in England over the winter. This is urgently required and something the BMA has been calling for to support the major challenges NHS staff are facing. At the ARM, a motion was passed expressing concern at the potential long-term impact of the pandemic and called for resources to support the profession. As we head into a second wave of the virus it is vital that staff are protected. [Find out more here](#).

LMC Website

The following guidance has been added to the LMC website www.worcslmc.co.uk this week:

[LMCE Conference Motion Outcomes](#)

Other COVID 19 Resources

[BMJ – news and resources](#)

[RCGP COVID-19 information](#)

[NHSE/I primary care bulletins](#)

[NICE resources](#)

WORCESTERSHIRE AND HEREFORDSHIRE LMC LTD

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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.

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All 20 practices are represented at Committee Meetings

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

The next LMC meetings will be:

Worcestershire – 10th December 2020
Herefordshire – 9th December 2020