

29th March 2021

COVID-19 ONE YEAR ON

This week marks one year since the first UK lockdown was introduced in order to combat the spread of COVID-19. A huge effort has been undertaken by practice teams to roll out the vaccination programme on top of the ongoing demands facing general practice. It is concerning that national daily case numbers have stopped falling and in some areas are rising again and there is clearly still some way to go in dealing with the pandemic.

The vaccination effort started only a few short months ago, and more than half of the adult population in the UK have already received at least one dose of the vaccine. It is an incredible achievement to have reached such a significant milestone so quickly.

The vaccine roll-out demonstrates that GPs, by the very nature of their contractual arrangements, are incredibly adaptive, flexible and responsive to new situations. GPs understand their patients and their communities. If practices are given the necessary resources and the flexibility to get on with it, that's what they do and this approach will now need to be carried through into our integrated care systems to enable the innovation and value of general practice to be realised across our two counties.

SUPPORT FOR CCGS IN ADDRESSING VACCINE INEQUALITIES

In February, £4.2 million of funding was allocated to STPs to be used across CCGs to support and enable locally led community engagement in all areas with health inequalities. NHSE/I has now pledged an [additional £3 million of funding](#) to support further local activity in addressing local vaccine inequalities. From 26 March, regions are invited to submit funding applications for their CCGs. Read more [here](#).

COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME

As reported last week, although vaccination supplies are increasing this week, there will be a [reduction of supply](#) of COVID-19 vaccinations from next week for about four weeks due to reductions in national inbound vaccines supply. We are told that this should not impact the delivery of second doses. Vaccination sites are encouraged to continue their efforts in maximising uptake in cohorts 1-9 which are yet to be vaccinated.

We are expecting a statement from JCVI shortly on details relating to the next phase of vaccination for groups 10-12.

Frequently Asked Questions for second doses

NHSE/I has published some [FAQs to help answer some questions relating to second doses of the COVID-19 vaccination](#), including location of second doses, interval period and consent.

Quality Assurance Framework and SOP for lateral flow devices for COVID-19 vaccination sites

NHSE/I has published a [Quality Assurance Framework for COVID-19 vaccination sites](#), to use as a tool aligned to the operating frameworks and standard operating procedures underpinning the delivery models for these settings.

NHSE/I has also published a [Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\) for usage of lateral flow devices for asymptomatic NHS staff testing](#) at vaccination sites.

COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy

There has been some confusion around the eligibility of pregnant women for the COVID-19 vaccine. While it is not currently available to all pregnant women, those who are at high risk of exposure to the virus, including health and care workers, or with high risk medical conditions *are* eligible. This includes women diagnosed with gestational diabetes in pregnancy or those with a BMI of more than 40 at their antenatal booking appointment.

The benefits and risks of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy should be discussed on an individual basis. The discussion should include acknowledgement that, while there is no known risk associated with giving other non-live vaccines to pregnant women, there are no specific data as yet about the safety of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy. More information including FAQs and a decision aid are available from the [RCOG website](#).

In addition, the National Clinical Director for Maternity and Women's Health, and the Chief Midwifery Officer, have published a [letter setting out actions for maternity services to identify and invite pregnant women for vaccination](#), and enabling them to make an informed choice about receiving it.

Read more about the latest changes, including the delivery of second doses, added funding, and what practices need to do and the support available in our updated [guidance page about the COVID-19 vaccination programme](#).

Vaccine dose data

Nearly [29 million people in the UK](#) have now received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and the latest [data report](#) shows that as of 25 March nearly 27 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been given in England.

MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS FOR PROSPECTIVE FOSTER CARER AND ADOPTERS

This week, we have published a [joint statement](#) with the Royal College of GPs, to support GPs in considering requests for medicals for prospective adopters and foster carers. These assessments play an important role in safeguarding vulnerable children and are the final requirement for many families across the country.

NHS OPERATIONAL PLANNING AND CONTRACTING GUIDANCE 2021/22

NHSE/I has published the [NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance for 2021/22](#), setting out the priorities for the year ahead, to restore services, meet new care demands and reduce the care backlogs caused by the pandemic, whilst supporting staff recovery.

One of the priorities is expanding primary care capacity, which will largely be done through the increased ARRS allocation, and a renewed focus on recruiting and retaining an additional 6000 GPs.

INVESTMENT IN GENERAL PRACTICE REPORT AND DATA QUALITY STATEMENT 2015/16-2019/20

NHSE/I has published the annual [Investment in General Practice Report 2015/16-2019/20](#), [Data quality statement](#) and [GP investment](#). This shows the level of investment in 2019/20 compared with previous years. The increased funding received by general practice in England is in a greater proportion compared to other sectors in the NHS and is as a direct result of our 5 year contract agreement.

ANNUAL ALLOWANCE VOLUNTARY SCHEME PAYS 2018/19 DEADLINE EXTENSION

In a previous newsletters we provided information on the annual allowance repayment scheme, which was introduced in England and Wales. The scheme guarantees any annual allowance tax charge in 2019/20, for eligible clinicians will be compensated for at the time of retirement. The deadline for submitting an application form for the scheme for GPs who have or who are planning to retire by 31 March 2021, has been extended to 31 March 2021. For detailed advice on the scheme, please click [here](#).

GPC ELECTION RESULTS

Voting for the GPC UK regions has now closed. Congratulations to Dr Sarah Matthews who has been elected for our region. We look forward to welcoming her to our meetings.

WORCESTERSHIRE ISSUES

PCN LMC LAW WEBINAR

The LMC is offering a **free** seminar from our lawyers, LMC Law on PCNs. This is a follow up to our previous PCN event and will provide an opportunity for PCNs to review how they are progressing, gain any top tips and to ask any specific questions.

Places are limited to **3 per PCN** and GPs and Practice Managers are welcome. Places will be allocated on a *first come, first served basis*.

Date: Wednesday 27th April 2021

Times: 12.30 – 2.30 pm

Joining Details: these will be emailed to attendees prior to the webinar – *only those that have booked a place will be permitted to join the webinar*

We strongly recommend that every Practice considers who is best to attend as part of their PCN. We are hoping that all of our PCNs in Worcestershire will be represented.

The online event is by ticket only and places can be booked by visiting:-

<https://www.worcslmc.co.uk/training> and clicking "event sign up". We hope to see some of you at the event.

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](#).

There is help and assistance available within the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Healthy Minds service. They are able to provide bespoke talking therapies for all colleagues irrespective of your role in your organisations to assist with anxiety, low mood, stress and other common mental health problems. Referral is easy and can be completed via visiting <https://www.healthyminds.whct.nhs.uk/>. This is a NHS service and as such is free at the point of contact and confidential.

The Service Manager, Phill Morgan Henshaw is happy to answer any questions regarding referral and treatment and can be contacted on 01432 842200 or via phill.morganhenshaw@nhs.net.

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](#).

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.

LMC WEBSITE

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

[Training Hub ARRS Induction Workshop](#)

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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Representatives:

All 20 practices are represented at Committee Meetings

Worcestershire and Herefordshire GPC Representative: Dr S Parkinson

The next LMC meetings will be:

Worcestershire – 22nd April 2021
Herefordshire – 14th April 2021