

19th April 2021

COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME

As lockdown restrictions are beginning to ease in varying ways across the UK, those aged 45 and over in England are now eligible to book an appointment via the [NHS national booking service](#) to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Practice groups can now invite these patients for their first vaccination if they have sufficient supplies alongside continuing with second vaccinations to those patients who are due to receive it.

This follows a statement published by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on [phase 2 of the COVID-19 vaccination programme](#), which recommends that the most effective way to minimise hospitalisations and deaths is to continue to prioritise people by age.

GPC England and NHSE/I have agreed an extension to the existing enhanced service specification for practice sites to administer vaccinations to patients between the age of 18 and 50. The service specification arrangements for this second phase of the programme will mirror the arrangements for the first phase, and sites will still get the £12.58 item of service fee for each vaccine administered. Read more about the next phase of the vaccination programme [here](#).

JCVI have also advised that individuals aged 18 to 49 years, in particular males in certain black, Asian or ethnic minority (BAME) communities, those with a BMI of 30 or more (obese/morbidly obese), and those experiencing socio-economic deprivation, should take up the offer of vaccination, as data has indicated that there is an increased risk of hospitalisation for this group.

In addition, the [Moderna vaccine](#) has begun to be delivered across more than 20 vaccination sites in England, following use in Scotland and Wales, for those aged 18-29 who are eligible, providing another alternative to the AstraZeneca vaccine in line with updated [MHRA guidance](#) last week.

Vaccinating during Ramadan

NHSE/I has published guidance on supporting [COVID-19 vaccine uptake during the Islamic month of Ramadan](#) which began on Monday 12 April 2021. The guidance aims to help vaccination sites build confidence, reduce barriers to access and support the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine amongst Muslim communities during the month of Ramadan.

Read more about the latest changes, including the arrangements for the second phase of the vaccination programme and what practices need to do, in our updated [guidance page about the COVID-19 vaccination programme](#).

Nearly [41 million COVID-19 vaccinations have now been delivered in the UK](#), and the latest [data report](#) shows that as of 15th April over 34 million doses have been given in England.

PRINCIPLE TRIAL ON COVID TREATMENT

Following the publication of findings from the Oxford-led [PRINCIPLE trial](#) on inhaled budesonide as a potential COVID treatment, NHSE/I has issued the following [advice](#) which states:

Inhaled budesonide is **not** currently being recommended as standard of care but can be considered (off-label) on a case-by-case basis for symptomatic COVID-19 positive patients, aged 65 and over OR those aged 50 or over with co-morbidities, in line with the published [Interim Position Statement](#). This Interim Position Statement clarifies that this includes co-morbidities that are 'consistent with a long-term health condition from the flu list'.

What is the background to this new Therapeutic Alert?

The PRINCIPLE trial [reported](#) a 3-day median benefit in self-reported recovery for patients with COVID-19 in the community setting who received inhaled budesonide. The impact on hospitalisation rates or mortality has not been established, but the evaluation is ongoing, so recommendations may change as more data become available. The current Therapeutic Alert is based on a decision by the Chief Medical Officer after consideration of the evidence.

What does this mean in practical terms?

*There is no expectation that inhaled budesonide will be routinely prescribed for patients in the eligible cohorts with COVID-19. Advice to patients on the management of COVID-19 has not changed. However, as stated in the Therapeutic alert, prescribers may *consider* prescribing it to reduce symptoms*

in eligible cohorts who are being managed in the community. This would be on a case-by-case basis using a shared decision making approach.

Where a decision is made to prescribe, prescribers are asked to ensure that the patient understands how to use the inhaler properly. As patients will be self isolating, this may be via video link (see below).

Patients will need to ask a friend or relative to collect the inhaler. If this is not possible, they can access the [NHS Volunteer Responders](#) service. They will also be eligible for free delivery if other routes are not possible.

For dispensing doctors

Additional supplies of the Pulmicort 400 Turbohaler (AstraZeneca UK Ltd) are now available to be ordered as needed through business as usual routes from wholesalers.

Information for patients

Information for patients can be found [here](#), including a link to videos explaining correct inhaler technique from Asthma UK.

FLU VACCINATION PROGRAMME 21/22

GPC have now received confirmation from NHSEI that there will not be central procurement of flu vaccine for the coming year's scheme, but the at-risk group will be extended as it was this year. Practices should therefore, where this is possible due to the late notice, take this into account when placing orders. The annual flu reimbursement letter was updated on 1 April. A copy of the latest version can be found [here](#). The letter confirmed that those aged 50-64 year old will be included in the 21/22 flu programme and also confirmed the inclusion of a QIVr vaccine (Supemtek).

GP CAREER SUPPORT HUB

A new [GP Career Support Hub](#) has been launched this week on the [Future NHS platform](#), containing all of the information GPs need to support them throughout their career.

The GP Career Support Hub is a central information point with resources to support GPs at all stages of their career - from newly qualified doctors to those approaching the end of their career. It provides information, guidance and support on career development, learning, mentoring, appraisals, career options/flexibility, wellbeing, pay and pensions to enable GPs to realise fulfilling, rewarding and exciting careers in general practice.

CALL FOR SWIFT ACTION TO REMOVE GMC'S POWER TO APPEAL TRIBUNAL DECISIONS

Thirteen leading healthcare organisations, including the BMA and five royal colleges, are [calling on the UK government to act to remove the General Medical Council's power to appeal against decisions by medical practitioners' tribunals](#). The government agreed in 2018 that the power, which duplicates similar powers held by the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), should be scrapped. Its abolition is included in draft legislation to reform the way healthcare professionals are regulated, on which the government is consulting. The healthcare bodies have told Matt Hancock, health and social care secretary for England, that the move is urgent and should be made now, by including it in the forthcoming health and social care bill.

NATIONAL E-REFERRAL SERVICE (E-RS) ADVICE AND GUIDANCE WEBINAR (ENGLAND)

To support mobilisation of [advice and guidance \(A&G\) services](#) as per the [2021/22 operational planning guidance](#), the NHSE/I is hosting a webinar for clinicians and system leaders about the National e-Referral Service on *Tuesday 20th April 2021, 4.00pm-5.30pm*.

The session will include an overview from NHS Digital on recent improvements that have been made to the NHS e-Referral Service A&G function, and will also share experience and learnings from clinicians working in primary and secondary care who have successfully implemented an A&G service, focusing on Cardiology, Gastroenterology and Urology.

If you would like to attend, please register [here](#).

If you have any feedback with regard to the e-RS, generally speaking or regarding the A&G function specifically, please let the BMA Workforce and Innovation Team know via info.wi@bma.org.uk.

Elected BMA representatives from both primary and secondary sit on the monthly e-RS Optimisation & Improvement Clinical Council. We can therefore feed examples of both good and bad practice into this group and seek resolutions to both local and national issues and concerns.

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.worcsimc.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:

[Flexible GP Pools Flyer](#)

[Flexible GP Champion - EOI](#)

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
Tel. 01527 65082**

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

- CHAIRMAN:** Dr David Herold
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Representatives:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| BROMSGROVE: | Dr D Pryke
Dr K Hollier | REDDITCH: | Dr I Haines
Dr M Shah |
| WYRE FOREST: | Dr M Davis
Dr S Morton
Dr J Rayner | WYCHAVON: | Dr D Herold
Dr J Rankin
Dr K Gines |
| MALVERN: | Dr P Bunyan
Dr R Khekar | 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)

Practice Manager Representatives:

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

First5 Rep: Dr M Venables
IT Rep: Dr R Williams
Non Principals: Dr W Safdar
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

The next LMC meetings will be:

Worcestershire – 22nd April 2021
Herefordshire – 26th May 2021