

23rd August 2021

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SUPPORTING GENERAL PRACTICE - LETTER FROM NHS ENGLAND

Dr Richard Vautrety has received a [letter](#) from Ian Dodge, National Director for Primary Care, Community Service and Strategy at NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I). This follows the meeting he had with Amanda Pritchard, the newly appointed NHSE/I chief executive, last week, and which was one of the first face to face meetings with any professional representative she had had since taking up her new role.

The letter acknowledges the pressures facing the profession, recognises its contributions and in doing so demonstrates a change of tone. It shows the steps NHSE/I is taking to rebuild relations with GPC England.

We are expecting NHSE/I to shortly publish further information on the service specifications and IIF with a focus primarily on 2022/23. As the letter suggests, they have heard the call to delay as much as possible of this until April 2022

at the earliest, whilst also continuing to invest the planned additional £150m for 2021/22.

SUPPORT YOUR SURGERY CAMPAIGN

In the next few days the BMA plan to launch their latest campaign – Support Your Surgery. This follows the unfair criticism that has been levelled at general practice in the news and across social media over the last few months due to the way practices have had to work during the pandemic because of the necessary infection, protection and control measures. All too often this has resulted in GPs and their team members receiving abuse.

To counter these perceptions and to put pressure on the Government to act to do more to support general practice, the campaign will provide practices with resources to help patients understand the reality of the issues facing general practice and to encourage them to join us in lobbying for the changes needed to address them.

EARNINGS AND EXPENSES REPORT 2019/20 (UK)

NHS Digital has published the [GP earnings and expenses figures for 2019/20](#). This is a UK report and provides details of both average earnings and expenses for contractor and salaried GPs in each of the four nations. However, as practice contracts now vary so much between nations, this annual report no longer produces any combined UK data. There were also significant factors in each of the nations in 2019/20 that impacted the outcomes and make interpretation and comparison more difficult. For instance, in England it was the first year of the five year contract package with the introduction of the widely welcomed new Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice, and in Northern Ireland some payments were delayed from the previous year. For reference, the DDRB recommendation for 2019/20 was for a 2.5% pay increase.

Overall the figures suggest that years of repeated, real-terms pay cuts for GPs are slowly reversing for both salaried GPs and GP contractors. They also highlight the rising expenses in running practices, with in England the expenses to earnings ratio (the proportion of gross earnings taken up by expenses), at a record high of almost 70%. This indicates how much GP contractors need to invest in their practices to maintain services for their patients.

COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME

Vaccinating 12-15 year olds with underlying health conditions

Following the advice from the JCVI that those aged 12–15 years with specific underlying health conditions that put them at risk of severe COVID-19 should

be offered two doses of the Pfizer vaccine with an interval of eight weeks between doses, NHSE/I has published a [letter](#) outlining the actions practices should take to help identify eligible 12-15 year olds (cohort 13) to ensure they are offered a COVID-19 vaccination appointment by 23 August 2021.

The letter includes a template letter for practices as well as a link to updated [FAQs on Vaccinating children and young people](#).

Vaccinating 16-17 year olds by 23 August

The [government has now also announced](#) that all young people aged 16 to 17 in England should be offered a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by Monday 23 August to give them protection before returning to school. Read the NHSE/I [letter](#) which outlines details of the amended enhanced service specifications to incorporate 16 and 17 year olds into cohort 12.

Spikevax vaccine (formerly COVID-19 Vaccine Moderna) for 12- to 17-year-olds

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has confirmed that the [Spikevax vaccine \(formerly COVID-19 Vaccine Moderna\) is safe and effective to use for 12- to 17-year-olds](#), thereby extending the current UK approval (currently authorised for over 18s).

NEW AND UPDATED COVID-19 NATIONAL PROTOCOLS

The following new or updated COVID-19 national protocols and PGDs have been published:

The updated [PfizerBioNtech mRNA vaccine BNT162b2 National Protocol v04.00](#)

The new [Comirnaty COVID-19 mRNA vaccine National Protocol v01.00](#)

The updated [PfizerBioNtech mRNA vaccine BNT162b2 PGD \(v04.00\)](#)

NHSE/I will also be publishing the new Comirnaty PGD v01.00 shortly.

BECTON DICKINSON BLOOD SPECIMEN COLLECTION SUPPLY DISRUPTION

Last week NHSE/I issued urgent [guidance on recommended actions](#) following an alert by Becton Dickinson to a global shortage of products from their Blood Specimen Collection Portfolio, which is expected to last a significant period of time. They advise that, other than in exceptional circumstances, vitamin D testing should be stopped, retesting and

monitoring intervals should be extended when clinically safe to do so and that routine screening for pre-diabetes and dyslipidaemia, allergy testing and routine infertility testing should be deferred until a resolution to the supply problem. GPC have raised this issue with the NHSEI primary care team and are seeking assurances that this will not impact tests required for contractual areas such as NHS health checks, QOF and drug monitoring. It would be unreasonable for practices to delay tests and then be expected to catch-up later, so adding to the current care backlog.

NHS Supply Chain has issued a [Customer Notice](#) which details the products impacted and the measures they have put in place. Practices that secure these products from Primary Care Support England (PCSE) should continue to order in this way. GP practices that do not usually order from PCSE can also order via [their process](#).

UPDATED PHE GUIDANCE ON NHS STAFF SELF-ISOLATION AND RETURN TO WORK FOLLOWING COVID-19 CONTACT

As of 16 August 2021 the government has changed the requirements to self-isolate following a positive COVID-19 contact, and PHE has updated its [guidance on how this changed will impact NHS staff and students working in the NHS](#).

Fully vaccinated staff and students who are identified as a contact of a positive COVID-19 case will no longer be expected to isolate and will be expected to return to work, after a number of safeguards have been implemented, such as a negative PCR test prior to returning.

It's important to remember that the updated guidance applies only to people who have the infection but are not showing symptoms. Anyone who develops symptoms should still self-isolate and end isolation only following a negative PCR test.

HEE IS LOOKING TO THE FUTURE FOR THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE

HEE has been commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care to work with partners and review long term strategic trends for the health and social care workforce. The [Long-Term Strategic Framework for Health and Social Care Workforce Planning](#) will review, renew and update [HEE's Framework 15](#), last published in 2014, to help ensure we have the right numbers, skills, values and behaviours to deliver world leading clinical services and continued high standards of patient care.

The BMA will make a submission, but HEE also wants to hear from as many stakeholders and partners as possible, including people who need care and support, service users, patients, carers, members of the workforce, as well as students and trainees.

They have launched a 'Call for Evidence' which is live until the 6 September - please do [complete the survey and have your say](#) if you have capacity to do so.

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.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT

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](#).

LMC WEBSITE

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

NO NEW ITEMS

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
Riverside Surgery, Waterside, Evesham, Worcs. WR11 1JP
Tel: 01386 444400 Email: d.herold@nhs.net

VICE-CHAIRMAN: Dr Matthew Davis
Bewdley Medical Centre, Dog Lane, Bewdley, Worcs
DY12 2EF
Tel. 01299 402157 Email: matthew.davis@nhs.net

SECRETARY: Dr Gillian Farmer
St Stephens Surgery, (address and contact details as above)
Email: gfarmer@worcslmc.co.uk

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Lisa Siembab
St Stephens Surgery, (address and contact details as above)
Email: lsiembab@worcslmc.co.uk

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 Khehar

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
Michelle Hallahan, 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: Dr R Williams
EDI: Dr R Benney

MEMBERS OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE COMMITTEE

SECRETARY: Dr Nigel Fraser
Wargrave House Surgery, 23 St Owen Street, Hereford, HR1 2JB
Tel: (01432) 272285 Email: nfraser@hereflmc.co.uk

MEDICAL DIRECTOR: Dr Paul Downey
St Stephens Surgery, Adelaide Street, Redditch B97 4AL
Tel: 01527 65082 Email: pdowney@hereflmc.co.uk

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Lisa Siembab
St Stephens Surgery, (address and contact details as above)
Email: lsiembab@worcslmc.co.uk

Representatives:

All 20 practices are represented at Committee Meetings

Worcestershire and Herefordshire GPC Representative: Dr S Parkinson

The next LMC meetings will be:

Worcestershire – 8th September 2021
Herefordshire – 9th September 2021