

Worcestershire

Local Medical Committee Ltd

NEWSLETTER

23rd December 2021

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Dear Colleagues,

Just when you thought you had seen our final newsletter before Christmas, here is another one! We felt you would want to have this information over the Christmas period in light of the challenges facing us. The guidance just keeps coming.....

NHS PRESSURES AND JOINT WORKLOAD PRIORITISATION GUIDANCE

The emergence of the COVID-19 Omicron variant, with ever increasing demand on healthcare services and rising numbers of staff sickness rates has the potential to significantly impact the delivery of general practice.

Whilst GPs and their teams will do their best to continue to prioritise the care they offer alongside providing COVID-19 vaccines, patients will be understandably concerned that some appointments will need to be postponed in order to ramp up the booster campaign.

Produced at the request of NHS England to help practices plan their participation in the booster programme, we at GPC England (GPCE) worked with the RCGP to update our joint [workload prioritisation guide](#), to support clinicians working in general practice across England to prioritise clinical and non-clinical workload, and to support practices in their planning. Read the [guidance](#).

This follows the announcement of [CQC Suspension](#) last week and temporary changes to [Fit notes and Certification](#) to support general practice teams with workload and in supporting the vaccination campaign.

INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL GUIDANCE

The national COVID-19 [infection prevention and control \(IPC guidance\)](#) has been updated in light of the rapid spread of the Omicron variant.

While the IPC guidance should act as a further shield against harm - in general practice, as it currently stands, more clarity and support are needed to ensure its effectiveness. In particular section 2.1 which now advises: "Where an unacceptable risk of transmission remains, it may be necessary to consider the use of respiratory protective equipment (RPE) in clinical areas where suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients are being managed."

Given what we know to date about Omicron's high rate of transmissibility, the LMC have continued to call for GPs to have access to RPE where needed. We also continue to highlight that many GP premises lack space and necessary ventilation for suspected COVID-19 patients to be seen in an appropriate and safe setting. We have recommended for pathways to be urgently implemented for patients with COVID related symptoms, to be seen in an appropriate and safe setting, such as COVID Hubs/ red sites. Local discussions involve considering how we can ensure the very best protection for yourselves and your staff.

The Department of Health and Social Care has subsequently confirmed that with regards to primary care access to FFP3, if a local risk assessment has been undertaken and primary care providers have been assessed as needing FFP3, the DHSC's PPE portal should be contacted with the result of the risk assessment and they will arrange access to FFP3s. Staff would need to be fit tested to FFP3s before the PPE portal can give access to the appropriate masks to which staff have been fitted.

The World Health Organisation has earlier today released a [statement with recommendations on mask use by health workers](#) providing care to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, in light of the Omicron variant of concern. Chair of Council Dr Chaand Nagpaul is writing on behalf of the profession for access to RPE in all settings. The Government has also produced a [poster about using face coverings in healthcare settings](#).

To support doctors through the booster vaccination campaign, the BMA has called for infection control measures to be reintroduced in all healthcare settings, and for the Government to introduce robust infection control measures in the community, especially where people mix in indoor settings. Read the [statement by the BMA Chair of Council](#).

EXPRESSION OF THANKS FROM THE UK CMOS

The UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) have published a [letter of thanks to the health profession](#):

“As 2021 draws to a close we mainly wanted to give an enormous thanks to all medical and wider health server staff. We have never been prouder to be members of the medical profession than over the last two grinding years.”

COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME

Amendments to the Enhanced Service Specification for Phase 3

The updated [Enhanced Service Specifications for Phase 3 of coronavirus vaccinations](#) have now been published. The amendments include:

- Extension of eligible cohort to include those aged 16 and over
- Clarification that where there may be conflicting guidance by JCVI, NHSE, MHRA and UKHSA, NHS England will confirm which guidance shall be adopted
- Financial supplements and extension of enhanced Item of Service fee to support practices during the national priority booster phase of the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination campaign

GPC had also suggested that NHSE/I made available a reference guide to summarise which vaccines can be given to which groups, and when patients become eligible for a second, third dose or booster, and NHSE/I has shared this [chart](#) (available on [FutureNHS](#)), which is updated weekly.

Second dose for 12-15 year olds

As part of the national mission to get people protected against the new Omicron variant, [12-15 year-olds are now eligible for their second COVID-19](#)

[vaccinations dose](#), if they had their first dose more than twelve weeks ago, in line with [updated guidance from the JCVI](#) published on 29 November.

Responding to vaccination data queries

The Vaccine Data Resolution Service (VDRS) aims to resolve missing or incorrect vaccination records for people vaccinated in England, Scotland or Wales who have a current NHS number and are registered with a GP practice in England. You can raise data quality issues directly with the VDRS team and you can direct your patients to access the service via 119. More information is available on [FutureNHS](#).

Recording overseas vaccinations in the National Booking Service

Eligible people can now book a face-to-face appointment via the [National Booking system](#) at a selected vaccination centre to show evidence of MHRA-approved COVID-19 vaccinations administered abroad and have them recorded in the National Immunisation Management System (NIMS). Support is also provided through 119 to signpost the service, or to make bookings on behalf of users. More information is provided when the user books an appointment.

COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for use by children aged 5 to 11

The Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been [approved for use by children aged 5 to 11 by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency \(MHRA\)](#), after finding it safe and effective.

UPDATES TO THE NETWORK CONTRACT DES

Following the [letter](#) of 3 December announcing changes to QOF and IIF and the temporary [GP contract changes](#) to support COVID-19 vaccination programme, NHSE/I has now updated the [Network Contract DES](#).

PCSE PATIENT LIST VALIDATION REQUESTS

Following the issue being drawn to the attention of GPC by LMCs, they have asked NHSE/I to pause PCSE emails to practices requesting full patient list validation exercises. NHSE/I agreed to this and have instructed PCSE to stop sending them until the beginning of February, when the decision will be reviewed.

Further to this, GPC have challenged the mention in these PCSE requests of a requirement to respond to the requests within five working days. NHSE/I have agreed that the contractual requirement is actually 30 days. They will raise this with PCSE but, should the wording remain unchanged when these requests are resumed, we would advise practices that they can actually use the full 30 days.

APPLICATION WINDOW FOR 2019/20 PENSIONS ANNUAL ALLOWANCE CHARGE COMPENSATION POLICY

The third GP application window for 2019/20 Pensions Annual Allowance Charge Compensation Policy applications is now open on the PCSE website [2019/20 Pensions Annual Allowance Charge Compensation Policy - Primary Care Support England](#). It closes on Friday 11 February 2022.

NEW ANNUAL LEAVE GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS OF SALARIED GPs

This newly published [guidance](#) produced by the sessional GP committee provides advice to the employers of salaried GPs to ensure that the process for processing and allocating annual leave is fair, transparent and flexible. Read 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.

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:

[Workforce Prioritisation Dec 2021](#)

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.

MEMBERS OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE COMMITTEE

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Representatives:

- | | | | |
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| BROMSGROVE: | Dr D Pryke
Dr K Hollier | REDDITCH: | Dr I Haines
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Dr S Morton
Dr J Rayner | WYCHAVON: | Dr D Herold
Dr J Rankin
Dr K Gines |
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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 E Ukorebi (South)

First5 Rep: Dr L Jones

IT Rep: Dr R Williams

Non Principals: Dr S Manton

Clinical Directors: Dr R Williams

EDI: Dr R Benney

Practice Manager Representatives:

Helen Garfield, Representative WF PM
Michelle Hallahan, Representative R&B PM
Meryl Foster, Representative SW PM

Worcestershire GPC Representative: Dr S Matthews

The next LMC meetings will be:

Worcestershire – 13th January 2022

