

Worcestershire Local Medical Committee Ltd

NEWSLETTER

25th April 2022

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PCN DES

The updated [PCN DES specification](#) was published at the start of this month. Whilst GPC England continues to support the principle of the DES – independently contracted practices collaborating, alongside other local NHS providers, to provide services which are designed to support local communities – and given the realities of the unagreed [contract changes](#) brought in by NHSE/I for 2022/23, practices should be aware of their options relating to the DES.

GPC believes that the newly added demands within the PCN DES are a risk to patient and practice staff safety in terms of potentially unmanageable/unsafe workload and burnout. Worryingly, the recent [GP Worklife Survey](#) confirmed that GPs are overworking, with around 33% likely to quit direct patient care within the next five years. This rises to over 60% for GPs over 50, which is a worrying statistic given over 44% of the GP workforce is over 45.

Following the conclusion of the 2022/23 contract negotiations and the release of the DES specification, further clarification was sought from NHSE/I and proposed practical solutions that it was felt would alleviate the concerns of the profession and any potentially negative impact from the unagreed changes. None of them were accepted.

With this in mind, practices will need to carefully consider the DES changes for 2022/23 and how this may impact them going forward. In particular, the incoming Enhanced Access requirements from October 2022 and the expanded service offer.

PCN DES opt out window

Practices who do not wish to continue participating in the PCN DES have until 30 April 2022 as part of the current annual opt-out window, with additional 30-day windows following any in-year changes to the enhanced service specification. Practices must inform the local commissioner if this is their decision **before** the stated deadline. It's important to note that opting out during a specified window is not a breach of contract.

Practices should take into account safe working levels from both a workload/staffing and patient perspective, bearing in mind the [BMA's safe working guidance](#).

Read more in the BMA [guidance about the contract changes](#) to support practices in their decision making and next steps.

GP workforce data

The number of [GPs](#) in England has fallen every year since the Government first pledged to increase the family doctor workforce by 5,000, the health minister Maria Caulfield disclosed in a [parliamentary answer](#). There were 29,364 full-time-equivalent GPs in post in September 2015, when the then health secretary, Jeremy Hunt, first promised to increase the total by 5,000 by 2020, however, it has now fallen to 27,920 as shown by the latest [GP workforce data from NHS Digital](#).

These figures show that the lack of doctors in general practice is going from bad to worse for both GPs and patients, and patients are paying the price in the form of long waits for an appointment. Dr Kieran Sharrock, GPCE deputy chair, [said](#):

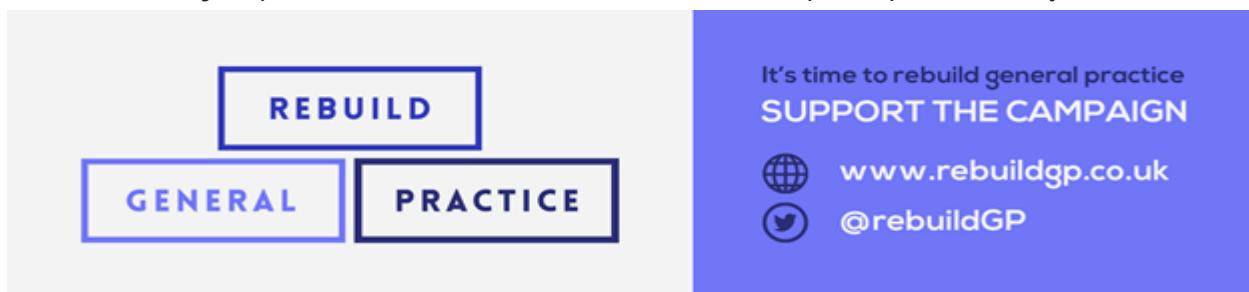
“Despite repeated pledges from the Government to boost the workforce by thousands, it’s going completely the wrong way. As numbers fall, remaining GPs are forced to stretch themselves even more thinly, and this of course impacts access for patients and the safety of care provided.”

It's time to rebuild general practice: support the campaign

The [Rebuild general practice campaign](#) continues to tackle the crisis facing general practice. The aim is to support GPs and their teams at an extremely challenging time to deliver the service that patients and staff deserve. Over the coming weeks, the campaign will build awareness of the key issues in the media, with the public and with politicians.

The campaign is calling for:

1. **Recruitment:** the UK Government delivering on its commitment to an additional 6,000 GPs in England by 2024.
2. **Retention:** tackling the factors driving GPs out of the profession such as burnout.
3. **Safety:** a plan to reduce GP workload and in turn improve patient safety.



Join our campaign for fair pay

Over the last two years doctors have worked tirelessly, with many putting their lives on the line to keep patients safe during the pandemic. With the NHS facing a backlog that will take years to clear, in the face of severe staff shortages, these extraordinary pressures are set to continue.

Inflation is soaring and doctors are being driven out of the NHS by punitive pension tax rules. The BMA is now calling on the UK Government to award doctors a minimum pay rise of RPI plus 2% for doctors, including those working in public health services.

The BMA is urging that doctors in England write to their local MP asking for their support for our campaign. Using the [BMA's online tool](#), you can add your name to a template letter, that will be automatically sent to your local MP.

Infection Prevention Control in healthcare settings

The UKHSA has revised the [Infection Prevention Control](#) (IPC) guidance for healthcare workers, and now advises returning to pre-pandemic physical distancing in all healthcare settings, including primary care, and returning to pre-pandemic cleaning protocols outside of COVID-19 areas, with enhanced cleaning only required in areas where patients with suspected or known infection are being managed.

The guidance continues to recommend that all healthcare organisations should undertake local risk assessments to ensure safe systems of work in the context of the wider impact of COVID-19 on health services. Practices should assess the risk to patients and staff using this guidance, and make decisions based on the needs and risks of everyone entering their practice building. Practices should also continue to triage patients and cohort people with respiratory illnesses. Read our [guidance](#) on risk assessments for practices

The guidance still advises that all patients, visitors and staff should continue to practise good hand and respiratory hygiene, including the continued use of face masks by staff and face masks / coverings by visitors and patients where clinically tolerated.

NHSE/I has published a [letter setting out these changes](#)

Read also the [BMA's briefing](#) in response to the Government's '[Living with COVID-19](#)' strategy which sets out the plans for managing COVID-19 going forward.

Download the updated [poster about using face coverings in practices](#).

Arrivals from Ukraine: advice for primary care

The UK government has published guidance [Arrivals from Ukraine: advice for primary care](#) to help primary care professionals assess and address the health needs of patients ordinarily resident in Ukraine who have arrived in the UK. Arrivals will usually be under the government visa schemes [Ukraine Family Scheme](#) and the [Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\)](#).

The guidance notes that it is important to adopt a [trauma-informed approach](#) that offers clear information and choice, supporting individuals to feel in control. Doctors of the World has produced the [Safe Surgeries initiative](#) (endorsed by the BMA) to tackle the barriers faced by many migrants in accessing healthcare, with GP registration being the first hurdle that this vulnerable group needs to overcome.

National flu immunisation programme 2022/23

UKHSA has published the annual [National flu immunisation programme 2022/23 letter](#) which sets out which groups are eligible for flu vaccination for the 2022/23 flu season.

NHSE/I will be publishing the specifications shortly, and have advised us that suppliers have committed to flexibility if the reimbursement letter has impacted current orders. Therefore, if practices are having trouble amending orders, they should contact the NHSE/I flu inbox phco.fluops@nhs.net.

Phoenix GP Programme

A second cohort of a fully funded, virtual GP Career Development & Leadership programme is coming to Herefordshire and Worcestershire starting in May 2022.

The [Phoenix GP](#) programme is a career and skills development programme specifically targeting GPs who are more than 3 years post CCT and those who have the potential to remain in practice for at least another 10 years. It provides a series of 6 evening sessions over 6 months for a cohort of up to 30 participants, balancing a series of talks from inspirational GPs with dedicated skills workshops developed by GP Leads from the Time for Care team to focus on some of the challenges faced by mid-career GPs. These include topics such as managing change, quality improvement, engagement & influencing people and facilitating online meetings.

The programme is free to attend and delivered virtually. All sessions are Thursday evenings from 7pm-9pm. The programme is supported nationally by NHSE and RCGP and is funded locally by the CCG with support from the LMC. Previous programmes have been extremely successful and universally well-received by attendees.

The confirmed line up of speakers include:

- **5th May 2022**, Professor Martin Marshall CBE, GP, RCGP Chair, Professor of Healthcare Improvement UCL
- **30th June 2022**, Dr Adrian Hayter, GP, National Director for Older People, and Integrated Person-Centred Care
- **14th July 2022**, Facilitation session with Hannah Miller, Coach, Sidekickco, looking at your individual Strengths Finder Assessment
- **22nd September 2022**, Dr Sonali Kinra, GP, Clinical Associate Primary Care, NHSE/I, RCGP Council
- **6th October 2022** Professor Graham Jackson GP, National Clinical Advisor NHSE/I Chair National Self Care Strategy Group, NHS Assembly

- **November 2022** (Date tbc) Dr Rachel Morris, GP Speaker, Host of “You are not a Frog” Podcast, and coach. Creator of the Shapes Toolkit Resilience Training Programme for Doctors and other professionals

Applications are welcome from GPs at any stage of their career, GPs who have completed the Next Generation GP programme may wish to progress to this programme and Locum GPs are also welcome to participate. **Sign up will be closing soon!**

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