

### **GP appointment figures and workload pressures**

The latest [GP appointment figures](#) in England published show that practices delivered almost 5 million more appointments in March than they did the month before, and nearly 3 million more than they did in the same month two years ago, long before the onset of the pandemic.

These figures underline the immense efforts that practices are going to providing care to their communities and the intense workload pressures that staff are under as we continue to respond to the pandemic alongside patients' wider health needs.

GPs and their teams are consistently advising they're busier now than they have ever been, and this data – which does not include a large proportion of the vaccine programme undertaken by practices, nor a vast amount of other daily tasks – backs this up.

Every day, more than a million patients in England had an appointment with their practices, whether this was the significant proportion seen face-to-face, on the phone, or via video call. With too few GPs and practice nurses, and a promise in 2015 of 5,000 extra family doctors within five years actually delivering a loss of almost 1,500 by September last year, individual doctors are taking on more and more as demand rises and the workforce diminishes.

So for GPs and many others in practices working 11 or 12-hour days, often leading heroic efforts to protect as many people as possible in their communities against a disease that has had such a devastating impact on all of us, it is heart-breaking and completely demoralising to hear accusations that general practice is not open and that patients are not being seen.

This narrative, categorically proven wrong by this data, is extremely damaging at a time when morale is already reaching rock bottom and many GPs, practice managers and others practice staff are reaching breaking point. With the ongoing use of telephone triage advised by NHSE/I, changes put in place for the protection of staff and patients alike due to the limits of the size of most practice reception areas - general practice is open, and staff need support, patience and understanding as they work harder than ever before. Read the full GPC statement [here](#)

### **COVID-19 vaccination programme**

People aged 40 and over are now eligible to book an appointment via the [NHS national booking service](#) to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Practice groups can 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.

Since the vaccination rollout began in December, over [34 million people in the UK](#) have received their first dose, and 14 million have also received their second dose.

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

### **New photographs show the people behind the national vaccination effort**

To mark the start of World Immunisation Week 2021, a series of photographs documenting the vaccination programme has been published by the Government. The photo montage comes as a new campaign begins urging under-50s to get the jab. [Find out more here](#)

### **Weekly COVID-19 data**

The BMA weekly COVID-19 data summary is [here](#).

### **Racism in primary care report**

Humberside LMC published [this report](#) following a survey in their area exploring the experience of racism in primary care. This is a challenging but important document and we are grateful for the LMC sharing it. The report is based on findings from a survey across all staff groups, and forms part of their wellbeing strategy. Further information can be obtained from Dr Zoe Norris, Wellbeing Lead for Humberside LMC, via [zoe.norris1@nhs.net](mailto:zoe.norris1@nhs.net)

### **Sir Simon Stevens to stand down as NHS England chief executive**

NHSE/I have [announced](#) that Sir Simon Stevens is to stand down at the end of July as NHS England chief executive. GPC have worked with Sir Simon and his team over the 7 years he has spent in this role and as a result have secured the landmark 5 year contract agreement with its significant funding increase, and more recently enabled GP practices to play a leading role in the successful delivery of the COVID vaccination programme. He has been a strong advocate for the vital role of General Practice within the NHS and he is wished all the best for the future.

### **Domestic Abuse Bill receives Royal Assent**

The [Domestic Abuse Bill has received Royal Assent](#) to become the Domestic Abuse Act. This means the provisions in the Bill will come into law over the coming months, and probably before the summer. The Bill contains a new measure which will prevent doctors from charging patients experiencing domestic abuse for letters to access legal aid. While BMA guidance has previously advised against charging for these letters, they continue to push for GPs to be removed from this legal aid process entirely – as they believe the current system disempowers victims and is unnecessary bureaucratic.

### **Serious Shortage Protocol for Estradot**

A [Serious Shortage Protocol \(SSP\) for Estradot](#)® 75 microgram patches, has been introduced. The prescriber will need to decide whether it is reasonable and appropriate to substitute the patient's prescribed order for the active SSP. The patient would also have to agree to the alternative supply for that dispensing month. Read the guidance on endorsement, prescription charges, remuneration and reimbursement, and Q&As [here](#)

### **Extension to the shingles immunisation programme**

Individuals become eligible for routine vaccination against shingles when they reach age 70, and all those aged up to and including 79, are now eligible to receive the vaccine until they reach age 80.

Individuals who are eligible for the shingles vaccination programme who turned 80 years during the pandemic and missed the opportunity to be vaccinated can now be vaccinated until 31 July. There are no contractual changes to this programme, the offer of vaccination is opportunistic or if requested for the catch-up cohort. GPs will continue to be reimbursed via the standard item of service fee, which should be claimed manually.

### **Launch of framework for suppliers of digital services to general practice**

The new [Digital first online consultation and video consultation framework](#) has been launched this week, which is intended to improve the standards of systems available for patients and practices. The new procurement framework means that PCNs working with commissioners can choose assured systems from a range of suppliers to better meet local needs.

The framework will allow products to be better tailored to user needs, including integrating online consultation systems with GP clinical systems and sending requests to other primary care services to reduce pressure on practices and navigate patients effectively.

### **Appraisal 2020 survey**

NHS England and Improvement is conducting a survey on Appraisal 2020. If you've used the new, streamlined format, which was introduced following concerns about workload pressures and the impact on wellbeing during the pandemic, then your thoughts will be valuable to help develop the format and make appraisal more useful for all doctors. Everyone who has used the new format is encouraged to take part, especially if you're a Responsible Officer. To take part please email [lily.tomkins1@nhs.net](mailto:lily.tomkins1@nhs.net) who will share a survey link according to your designated body.

### **Global health leaders back BMA call for urgent action as COVID crisis in India worsens**

The scenes we are witnessing in India, Brazil and other countries with rising cases of COVID-19 are deeply concerning and demonstrate how important it is to have a global approach to tackling the pandemic. Following the unanimous passing of an [emergency motion](#), proposed by BMA council chair Chand Nagpaul at last week's virtual meeting of the World Medical Association in South Korea, the BMA has called on the UK Government to do more to support countries tackling a worsening COVID-19 crisis. Read the [letter to the prime minister](#)

### **Clare Wand Fund trustee elections**

Nominations are now open for three trustees to the [Claire Wand Fund](#) 2021-2024. Any registered medical practitioner who is, or has been, actively engaged in practice as a general medical practitioner in the UK under the NHS Acts is eligible for nomination by an LMC representative.

If you are interested in standing for election, please contact your LMC representative and complete the self-nomination process online via this [link](#). You will be asked to specify your nominating LMC representative during the online self-nomination process. We also ask that the nominating LMC representative confirms the candidate's name via email to [elections@bma.org.uk](mailto:elections@bma.org.uk). An LMC representative may make not more than one nomination. If you are unsure of your LMC representative please find the contact details of your LMC [here](#).

To participate in these elections you must have a BMA web account, if you do not have one please click [here](#) to create one. Please follow the link to 'request a temporary non-member account' and email your temporary membership number to [elections@bma.org.uk](mailto:elections@bma.org.uk). The deadline for nominations is 5pm Tuesday 11 May. To submit your nomination please visit <https://elections.bma.org.uk/>

Voting for these positions is only open to LMC UK conference representatives and will conclude on 17 May.

### **Mental health and wellbeing – looking after you and your practice team**

**GP appraisal leads and GP tutors offer of telephone support conversations** remain for any GP who feels they would like to talk through any aspect of their professional/personal life that has been affected by Covid. To organise a telephone support conversation, either with the appraisal lead or with a GP tutor, please contact the appraisal team, or email [di.jelley@nhs.net](mailto:di.jelley@nhs.net)

**Crisis Coaching & Mentoring:** [Coaching and mentoring sessions are available now](#) for all NHS and Health and Social Care leaders. Delivered by The Centre for Army Leadership and Meyler Campbell Coaching, these sessions are designed to support with the huge pressure on the ability of the NHS to deliver safe, high-quality care, sharpen focus on meeting the core needs of staff, ensuring wellbeing and sustained motivation to deal with this rapidly changing situation. The intervention will give leaders an understanding of crisis leadership that goes beyond what is necessary, and focused on engagement and motivation through Covid19. Further information and how to register [see link here](#)

CLMC continue to [offer wellbeing services via Validium](#) for **ALL working in general practice** within Tees (including locums). We understand that a number of staff have accessed this confidential service and it has been well received.

The BMA's report on the [mental health and wellbeing of the medical workforce](#) which sets out ten recommendations to be addressed to protect staff during the pandemic and in the future. 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. For hard copies of the Wellbeing [poster](#), please email [wellbeingsupport@bma.org.uk](mailto:wellbeingsupport@bma.org.uk)

There is also a wealth of NHSE provided [support available](#) to you and your team including a **wellbeing support helpline, a 24/7 text alternative, peer to peer, team and personal resilience support, free mindfulness apps and the #LookingAfterYouToo coaching offer.**

NHSEI have recently developed a [new communications toolkit](#) and resources to help promote their offers to the workforce. The toolkit has an overview of each offer, including bulletin, email and social media copy, and links to some case studies and posters. You can also follow this link [Primary Care Coaching – Link to Assets](#) to a range of resources, including social media assets, a video, PDF case studies and posters, website and email banners.

**GPC GP Bulletin**

Read the latest GP bulletin [here](#).