

COVID-19 one year on

It is one year since the first UK lockdown was introduced in order to combat the spread of COVID-19 and the fight back, with the help of the vaccination roll-out, is gathering speed. It is though concerning that national daily case numbers have stopped falling and in some areas are rising again. There is clearly some way to go in dealing with the pandemic.

The vaccination effort started only a few short months ago, and more than half of the adult population in the UK have already received at least one dose of the vaccine. It is an incredible achievement to have reached such a significant milestone so quickly. Thank you to all involved in this vitally important task which has been achieved whilst at the same time managing many other workload pressures.

Practices across the nation have been working together in groups, often in PCNs (primary care networks) to deliver the vaccination programme locally. Ever since we started, practices have been vaccinating people come rain or shine. Even when snowstorms tried to put a spoke in the wheel, armies of volunteers rallied with shovels, clearing snow in car parks and enabling people to get to their appointments.

The vaccine roll-out demonstrates the value of general practice. GPs, by the very nature of their contractual arrangements, are incredibly adaptive, flexible and responsive to new situations. They understand their patients and their communities. If you give practices the necessary resources and the flexibility to get on with it, that's what they will do. And that is exactly what has happened.

Read the full article [here](#)

Support for CCGs in addressing vaccine inequalities

In February, £4.2 million of funding was allocated to STPs to be used across CCGs to support and enable locally led community engagement in all areas with health inequalities. NHSE/I has now pledged an [additional £3 million of funding](#) to support further local activity in addressing local vaccine inequalities. From 26 March, regions are invited to submit funding applications for their CCGs. Read more [here](#)

COVID-19 vaccination programme

There will be a [reduction of supply](#) of COVID-19 vaccinations from next week for about four weeks due to reductions in national inbound vaccines supply. We are told that this should not impact the delivery of second doses. Vaccination sites are encouraged to continue their efforts in maximising uptake in cohorts 1-9 which are yet to be vaccinated.

We are expecting a statement from JCVI shortly on details relating to the next phase of vaccination for groups 10-12.

COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy

There has been some confusion around the eligibility of pregnant women for the COVID-19 vaccine. While it is not currently available to all pregnant women, those who are at high risk of exposure to the virus, including health and care workers, or with high risk medical conditions are eligible. This includes women diagnosed with gestational diabetes in pregnancy or those with a BMI of more than 40 at their antenatal booking appointment.

The benefits and risks of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy should be discussed on an individual basis. The discussion should include acknowledgement that, while there is no known risk associated with giving other non-live vaccines to pregnant women, there are no specific data as yet about the safety of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy. More information including FAQs and a decision aid are available from the [RCOG website](#).

In addition, the National Clinical Director for Maternity and Women's Health, and the Chief Midwifery Officer, have published a [letter setting out actions for maternity services to identify and invite pregnant women for vaccination](#), and enabling them to make an informed choice about receiving it.

Read more about the latest changes, including the delivery of second doses, added funding, and what practices need to do and the support available in the updated GPC [guidance page about the COVID-19 vaccination programme](#).

Frequently Asked Questions for second doses

NHSE/I has published some [FAQs to help answer some questions relating to second doses of the COVID-19 vaccination](#), including location of second doses, interval period and consent.

Quality Assurance Framework and SOP for lateral flow devices for COVID-19 vaccination sites

NHSE/I has published a [Quality Assurance Framework for COVID-19 vaccination sites](#), to use as a tool aligned to the operating frameworks and standard operating procedures underpinning the delivery models for these settings.

NHSE/I has also published a [Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\) for usage of lateral flow devices for asymptomatic NHS staff testing](#) at vaccination sites.

Vaccine dose data

Nearly [29 million people in the UK](#) have now received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, and the latest [data report](#) shows that as of 25 March nearly 27 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been given in England.

Weekly COVID-19 data update

The BMA's Health Policy team is now producing a weekly summary of key data on various aspects of the pandemic. The data is from external published sources (with links to the relevant data/study) and can be shared. [View the latest summary](#)

Medical assessments for prospective foster carer and adopters

GPC have published a [joint statement](#) with the Royal College of GPs, to support GPs in considering requests for medicals for prospective adopters and foster carers. These assessments play an important role in safeguarding vulnerable children and are the final requirement for many families across the country.

NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance 2021/22

NHSE/I has published the [NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance for 2021/22](#), setting out the priorities for the year ahead, to restore services, meet new care demands and reduce the care back logs caused by the pandemic, whilst supporting staff recovery.

One of the priorities is expanding primary care capacity, which will largely be done through the increased ARRS allocation, and a renewed focus on recruiting and retaining an additional 6000 GPs.

Annual allowance voluntary scheme pays 2018/19 deadline extension

The annual allowance repayment scheme, introduced in England and Wales, guarantees any annual allowance tax charge in 2019/20, for eligible clinicians will be compensated for at the time of retirement. The deadline for submitting an application form for the scheme for GPs who have or who are planning to retire by 31 March 2021, has been **extended to 31 March 2021**. For detailed advice on the scheme, please click [here](#).

BMA report on impact of COVID-19 on health inequalities

The BMA has launched a report, '[Mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on health inequalities](#)', outlining a range of measures for Governments across the UK to ensure that those who have been most impacted by COVID-19 are protected in the immediate and longer term.

The report highlights concerns that the unacceptable inequalities that existed before the pandemic will only worsen for families who have been pushed into poverty, and disadvantaged communities that face further hardship due to job losses and COVID-19's socio-economic impact.

The BMA wants to work towards addressing the underlying inequalities which lead to unacceptable and avoidable differences in life expectancy, as well as quality of life across all communities. Read more and read the report [here](#)

GPC Voting open for Durham and Cleveland regional elections

The voting period for seats to the General Practitioners Committee (GPC) UK in the *Durham and Cleveland region* has reopened. **To submit your vote please visit <https://elections.bma.org.uk/>**

If you live or work in the Durham and Cleveland region and do not have access to the voting, please contact elections@bma.org.uk and the team will be able to assist.

To vote in this election 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 to get access to vote in this election. **The deadline for voting is 12pm, 19 April.**

If you have any queries regarding the election process, please contact elections@bma.org.uk.

Investment in General Practice report and data quality statement 2015/16-2019/20

NHSE/I has published the annual [Investment in General Practice Report 2015/16-2019/20, Data quality statement](#) and [GP investment](#). This shows the level of investment in 2019/20 compared with previous years. The increased funding received by general practice in England is in a greater proportion compared to other sectors in the NHS and is as a direct result of the 5 year contract agreement.

BMA moral distress survey

The BMA has launched a [survey on moral distress](#), open to all UK doctors, including retired doctors, although it is not aimed at medical students. **The survey will remain open until Sunday 11 April.**

The survey asks about your understanding of moral distress and moral injury, whether you have come across these terms before or have experienced them. The impact of COVID-19 and potential solutions are also considered. The findings will be used to make recommendations and allow the BMA to help mitigate this problem throughout the UK's medical workforce.

Take the survey, and read more about moral distress and how it impacts doctors, [here](#).

NHS Confederation Survey: ICS and the White Paper

NHS Confederation have developed a survey around ICS membership and principles. Please click on the link and complete the survey before close of play on Wednesday 31st March.
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HLH79XK>

In addition, CLMC will be discussing the White Paper and potential impact for practices at our open meeting on Tuesday 13 April. All details, including discussion papers, are included on the email which accompanied the bulletin this week. Please do engage and ensure you have your say; we understand all are busy but the proposed changes will be with us long after Covid pressures subside so it is important that practices do not sleepwalk into a new era of the NHS!

Webinars: Circulated by the Primary Care Training Hub and provided by Nuffield Health

Weds 14 April: 6.30pm – Emergency Contraception Update (guest speaker Dr Anagha Nadgir)

Includes the management of heavy menstrual bleeding & abnormalities in Primary Care

Tues 20 April: 6.30pm – Protecting your Practice from Cyber Attacks (Cleveland Police Cyber Protection Unit)

Cyber crime is up 46%. The Cyber Protection Unit at Cleveland Police have designed a session suitable for GPs, Practice Managers & Pharmacies, covering the basics of a cyber attack, how hackers get in to systems and the importance of knowing how to protect the organisations for whom we work

Please send all RSVPs to tees.events@nuffieldhealth.com

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

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

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.

BMA COVID-19 guidance

The BMA [COVID-19 toolkit for GPs and practices](#) includes updates in the COVID-19 vaccination programme section and protecting clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) patients section. There is also guidance on the following topics:

- [Model terms of engagement for a GP providing temporary COVID-19 services](#)
- [Terms and conditions for sessional GPs](#)
- [Risk assessments](#)

GPC GP Bulletin

Read the latest GP bulletin [here](#)