

**COVID-19 vaccination programme (CVP) national guidance**  
**(CLMC have provided a Q&A document via email to support practices in finding the answers to questions that have been raised locally, regionally and nationally)**

We expect the specification for the COVID-19 vaccination programme to be published this week, with more information for the many practices that have identified designated sites to use for the shared delivery of the programme. GPC have updated their newly published [guidance](#) about the CVP to explain the specific characteristics for two of the potential vaccines that are likely to be supplied in the UK and how practices can prepare for this. There is also a clarification that the latest information on the vaccines suggests that patients do not need to be observed following administration of the vaccine, but patients must not drive for 15 minutes after.

GPC have added a new section about how practices can utilise the resources and contractual flexibilities provided, including the use of PCN staff, extended access services and using QOF and local enhanced services income protection to enable workload prioritisation, and considering what is needed to practically deliver the vaccine and workforce issues.

Richard Vautrey, GPC Chair, has also written a blog about GPs taking lead role in defeating the virus which you can read [here](#)

NHS England has written to system leaders on the **COVID-19 vaccination deployment strategy and operational**. This [letter](#) to NHS organisations relates more to the Trust and mass vaccination services but is useful information for practices preparing to be involved in the CVP.

**Flu vaccination programme**

CLMC shared the announcement of the extended flu vaccination campaign (over 50s) commencing 1 December with all practices very (very!) early on Friday morning. Once again, apologies to those who first heard the announcement via media. We are doing all we can to get information to you as soon as possible whilst also respecting confidentiality and embargoes on national statements.

The Department of Health in England have announced that all those over-50 can be included in the influenza programme from 1 December. Practices can order additional vaccines from the national store (all the details on ordering stock is included in this, now updated, [guidance](#))

Following the impressive work of practices in recent weeks, flu vaccine uptake is higher in all vulnerable groups except pregnant women compared to this time last year. Provisional data published by PHE suggests 72.9% of those aged 65 and over, 45.0% of 2 year olds and 46.8% of 3 year olds have had their vaccine.

NHSE bulletin of 20/11/20 included this update:

***Extension of flu vaccination programme to 50 to 64 year olds***

*Thank you for the incredible work you have done so far in vaccinating eligible cohorts on the flu vaccination programme. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has now announced the [extension of the programme to 50 to 64 year olds](#). General practices and community pharmacies will be able to vaccinate all 50-64-year olds from 1 December, and should begin planning now, for example, ordering additional stock and organising appointment slots. Vaccination of priority groups should continue alongside this new cohort. Supply is available from the national stock to support this extension. However, it is not known what the exact patterns of uptake will be for this new cohort, so you are advised to only order as much as you need for the immediate term.*

*This is particularly relevant to general practice given the COVID-19 vaccination programme will begin shortly which will need to be balanced alongside the flu programme and may result in more patients accessing flu vaccinations at community pharmacies in the latter part of the season. It is important to make every effort to ensure as many people as possible in this cohort are vaccinated prior to delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine.*

*DHSC will also be updating its guidance to [general practice](#) and [community pharmacy](#) on accessing centrally supplied flu vaccines which includes an update on the availability of supplies. Please note that it is also very important that routine childhood vaccinations are maintained to ensure these cohorts are not disadvantaged during delivery of the flu and Covid vaccination programmes.*

### **Secretary of State praises GPs' pandemic response**

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care in England, led the No 10 briefing on Monday 16 November, and in response to a question from the media he said:

“What I'd say to every GP is how grateful I am for the work that you're doing, and your whole practice, everybody in primary care, both on the flu vaccine right now, which is being rolled out in record numbers – we've had a record uptake, we've had a 10 percentage point increase in the normal uptake of flu vaccines and that's really good news – and of course on the normal pressures of primary care. I'm really glad that a much bigger proportion of appointments in primary care are now done either over the phone or by video because that makes life easier for GPs and patients and there's been a really positive response to that. But that doesn't of course lift the whole burden, even though it makes access easier. I want to thank in advance GPs for all the work that I know that they're doing now and that there'll be even more of this winter to keep people safe.”

### **Letter to Secretary of State for Health on the need for CQC support for general practice**

GPC have received a response from the CQC (Care Quality Commission) to their letter which urged the CQC to halt all non-essential inspections and practice monitoring to allow GPs and their teams, currently under immense pressure, to focus on the job at hand during the pandemic. Disappointingly, the CQC are not prepared to change their transitional regulatory approach, although it has confirmed that it will only inspect based on risk – i.e. where there are serious concerns around safety and quality of care.

GPC have now written this [letter](#) to Matt Hancock to raise concerns about this calling again for an immediate suspension of all CQC inspections and reviews of general practice, other than those required for serious safety issues. This should be for the duration of the pandemic and to enable practices to focus on other priorities, not least the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

### **Highest ever GP trainee acceptances figures**

Health Education England (HEE) has published figures this week which show the highest ever number of GPs entering training in England with 3,793 posts accepted, exceeding their target of 3,250. GP trainee acceptances have increased year on year for the last 7 years and these figures represent a 40% increase on the figure of 2,700 recruits when HEE started its recruitment drive back in 2014. This is welcome news, and a sign that the changes being made are leading to more and more young doctors are being attracted to a career in general practice. Read more [here](#)

### **BMA report on exiting the lockdown in England**

BMA has launched a [new report warning that lifting lockdown](#) in England without new measures in place risks deepening the crisis in our health service, and will leave hospitals and GP practices overwhelmed, unable to provide even the most critical of patient care.

The report outlines major reforms for England, once lockdown is lifted, to keep infection rates low and pull back the NHS from collapse this winter. The BMA is calling for the new measures to be brought in, to bridge the time between the planned end of lockdown in England, on December 2nd, and an effective vaccine programme getting underway. Read more [here](#)

### **Bone health card to help patients stay on osteoporosis medication**

Each year a large number of people suffer from fragility fractures, and over three quarters of people who are prescribed osteoporosis medication are not on treatment a year on from their fracture. People who have sustained one fragility fracture are twice as likely to sustain another, which can be life altering and it has been shown that osteoporosis medication needs to be taken continuously for several years to be effective at preventing further fractures.

The Royal College of Physicians' Fragility Fractures Audit Programme (FFFAP) has, in collaboration with the BMA's GP committee and the Royal College of GPs, developed [the bone health card](#) to help patients with fragility fractures to discuss their medication and any issues with their primary healthcare team to ensure key information is discussed when reviewing medication and where to get further information and support.

### **Shifting the Odds gambling awareness service, NHS Northern Gambling Service**

Only 3% of the estimated 3-5 million harmful gamblers either seek or are referred for treatment in the UK. Odds are that many of the remaining 97% are your patients.

NHS National Gambling Service is launching a concerted drive to raise awareness of problem gambling and are urging GPs, clinical surgery staff, and all primary care practitioners to engage with their patients to identify those most at risk of harmful gambling.

The Northern Network's 'Shifting the Odds' campaign is designed to give practitioners not only sample questions to include on initial patient screening questionnaires but also strategies for identifying gambling-related symptom presentations.

They also provide conversational methods for introducing gambling questions during routine patient visits and telephone consultations. Together, their clinical expertise and practices' increased awareness of harmful gambling will make a huge impact on patients (and their friends and families) across the North. The resource centre is [here](#).

The Clinical Lead of the NHS Northern Gambling Service is very willing to attend any forthcoming network group meetings to discuss the campaign, the reasons why they are urging action and answer any questions about the NHS Northern Gambling Service and how they can work with to shift the odds on harmful gambling.

### **GPC England meeting**

GPC England held its first meeting of the session yesterday. Bruce Hughes was congratulated on his re-election as the GPC UK Policy Lead for representation and Rachel Ali on her appointment as the committee's first ever gender diversity champion, which was one of the main proposals of GPC's Gender Task and Finish Group. Rachel McMahon was also thanked for her work as England LMC Conference Chair and for her contributions as a member of GPC England in that capacity. It was noted that as chair of England conference she has set the bar very high for the incoming chair as Rachel's term of office will end after the England LMC conference which is due to be held virtually on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November.

GPC England spent significant time considering the important work being undertaken in general practice in response to COVID 19. There was also an important discussion on the preparations for the delivery of the COVID vaccination in primary care. GPCE also received update reports from the sessional GPs committee, GP trainees committee and GPC policy leads. These focused on a number of recent developments including pay and contracts, well-being, and education and training issues.

Other items on the agenda included an update on issues relating to Digital First, considering the BMA council decision about submitting evidence to the DDRB, and an update on the DHSC/NHSEI bureaucracy review of general practice.

### **Parental leave webinar and workshop**

GPC have published [guidance for GPs on parental leave](#) and will be hosting a webinar and workshop for more in depth guidance on these issues:

- 2 December from 12.30pm – 2.00pm – *Webinar - 'GP Maternity and Parental leave Guide: launch and introduction to the guide'*. Register [here](#)
- 9 December from 12.30pm – 2.30pm – *Workshop - 'GP maternity'*. Register [here](#)

If you would like to submit questions in advance to be covered at either session, please contact Christopher Scott via [cscott@bma.org.uk](mailto:cscott@bma.org.uk)

### **GMC virtual conference**

The General Medical Council is holding a virtual conference, *Delivering change together*, from Monday 30 November to Wednesday 2 December. Lord Victor Adebowale, Chair of the NHS Confederation, will be joining day one of the event and will discuss the role of healthcare system leaders in tackling inequalities, and what closing the gap means for health outcomes. If you are interested in attending or finding out more about the programme, you can register your interest [here](#). There is no cost to attend, but places are limited.

If you have any questions, please contact the GMC at [events@gmc-uk.org](mailto:events@gmc-uk.org)

### **Mental health and wellbeing – looking after you and your practice team (new information included)**

**StartWell EndWell** was developed by North Bristol NHS Trust's senior clinicians, lead psychologist for staff wellbeing, quality improvement team, and Perform team during the early stages covid19. StartWell>EndWell has been designed to provide a practical approach to support colleagues to promote effective teaming, particularly during challenging periods.

Webinars will be taking place on: Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December

Webinars Timing: Participants to attend from 3.45pm - Session will start 4pm to 5pm

Joining Instructions: Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Find out more [here](#)

### **Leadership Support Circles (National Autumn Offer 2020-2021)**

Leadership Support Circles are part of the National Health and Wellbeing response to Covid19 to support the wellbeing of #OurNHSPeople. They provide evidence-based guidance and tools in a series of short, themed and interactive online sessions based on 10 principles for leading compassionately. Leadership Support Circles are a reflective space for managers at all levels to come together in a multi-disciplinary setting to share their experiences and be heard. Further information and how to register click the link [here](#)

**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](#)

**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)

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. It will remain in place until at least 1 April 2021.

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](#).**

### **GPC GP Bulletin**

See this week's GP bulletin [here](#).