

Dear Colleagues

Last week, I chaired the first GPC England (GPCE) meeting with your newly elected Officer team. We pledge to do all we can to deliver you - the profession we are elected to serve - a contract that feels **sustainable**, that brings a modicum of **hope** to contractors, that feels **safe** for GPs to work in, and brings back more **trust** with our patients.

Our strength lies in our independence: we are all different – as are our patients, our populations and our challenges. A one size fits all model won't work, and repeated calls for transformation feel hollow when there is no resource to fix a leaking surgery roof, let alone build a community urgent care hub. Politically, we have a window of opportunity to positively influence and make the unarguable case for general practice. As autonomous advocates for our patients, consulting with well over a million voters every single day. We will confidently articulate what an extraordinary impact GP has on the NHS in the months ahead, and how it is the solution to so many of its problems – if we are allowed to thrive.

GPs are the remaining branch of practice not in formal dispute, for now. Ministers have a choice: an opportunity to listen and land a safe and reasonable contract for 2024/25, a year when MPs are more likely to prefer to focus on their constituency majorities than a prolonged contractual wrangle with general practice. We are ready and willing to help Ministers learn how to slow the attrition rates of GPs, so that a year from now we see green shoots of a retained and returning workforce. The choice is there for them to take.

GPC England received and passed an emergency motion calling for an investigation into the distressing mismanagement of this year's winter Covid and Flu vaccination programmes. The widespread confusion caused continues to seriously impact upon patient safety. In August, it was announced that the programmes, which usually commence in September and aim to vaccinate as many vulnerable patients as possible ahead of winter, would be delayed until October. With practices having already planned and booked vaccine clinics many months in advance, this threatened to cause mass disruption necessitating many hundreds of thousands of appointments to be rearranged to accommodate the Government's new timetable. [BMA lobbying](#) prompted an eventual U-turn, but this came with a caveat to deliver the majority of Covid vaccines before the end of October, lest practices face a 25% reduction in resource – despite the emergence of a new Covid variant. For practices, this may make continuing to offer the Covid vaccine through winter financially unviable without additional support. Read my statement in response, [here](#).

Biobank

Yesterday, in a communication to practices dated 13 September requesting GPs provide Biobank UK with access to consented patient data, the BMA was listed as endorsing the programme. The chief executive of Biobank UK has written to me to apologise that this communication was issued in error. I have asked him to kindly issue a redaction, correction and clarification accordingly.

Our position remains unchanged – we appreciate the pressure many practices are under and support them, as data controllers, to take the time they feel necessary to fully consider all requests to share patient data, taking into account the need to balance these with pressing clinical priorities. This is especially pertinent given the pressures of the accelerated vaccination schedule, and the impending accelerated access to records programme.

Accelerated Access to Records Programme update

The 31 October 2023 is the date by which practices must have provided their patients with the facility to access their prospective GP record online. GPC England remains concerned about the potential risks of providing the facility to all patients irrespective of patients' preferences. We remain in discussion with NHS England about how the programme can be rolled out safely.

We plan to issue comprehensive guidance for practices next week (w/c 2 October) outlining the steps that practices can take to prepare before 1 November. NHSE and the DHSC have assured us that commissioners will be expected to implement this programme in a supportive way.

The BMA is undertaking a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) relating to this programme and will be providing guidance for practices needing to undertake their own. A DPIA can be used by practices to assess the risks potentially posed by the new requirements, and support decisions they may wish to make about how to provide the facility in the safest possible way.

There are a number of on-line resources already available, including the [RCGP toolkit](#).

DDRB Pay Award

We are pleased to confirm that negotiations with NHS England have satisfactorily concluded, and details will be published on Monday, together with updates to the SFE (statement of financial entitlements). We shall be writing to practices separately and communicating a press release then.

GP pressures – workforce data

The latest [GP workforce data](#) has been published showing that the number of fully qualified GPs continue to decline and in August 2023, the NHS in England had the equivalent of 27,246 fully qualified full-time GPs, 2,118 fewer than in September 2015.

The longer-term trend is that the NHS continues to lose GPs at an alarming rate: over the past year we have lost the equivalent of 269 fully qualified full-time GPs. The number of practices in England has also decreased by 110 over the past year – and as of August 2023, there was another record-high of almost 63 million patients registered in England, with another record-high average of 9,872 patients registered per practice. This is an increase of 363 patients per GP, or almost 20% since 2015, demonstrating the ever-mounting workload in general practice. Read more about GP pressures [here](#).

Inform your PPG, and engage your local media by using our press release [here](#).

We urge practices to continue to use our [safe working guidance](#) to limit contacts to 25 per day in order to prioritise safe patient care, within the present bounds of the GMS contract.

CNSGP indemnity guidance for general practice

In response to queries regarding the scope of CNSGP cover, please use the following link [CNSGP Indemnity Scheme for General Practice](#). Colleagues will need additional cover from their medical defence organisations for performance issues (such as those relating to NHS England and the GMC) together with support with coroners' queries, and matters referred to the Ombudsman.

Colleagues should also confirm that their medical defence organisation also covers them for non-NHS services delivered individually, or by their practice. Non-NHS clinical services (e.g. DVLA, local authority safeguarding etc) are not covered by CNSGP.

Best Practice Show, 11-12 October 2023, NEC Birmingham

The BMA and GPC England will be at [Best Practice Show](#), UK's number one event for the primary care and the general practice community, on **11-12 October 2023**. We will have a dedicated theatre at the conference, with a programme focussed on the most pressing issues facing sessional GPs and GP partners, including safe working and workload management, patient access to records, the future of general practice, GP contracts and more. It is **free for healthcare professionals** and will provide up to 12 hours of CPD certified training, tailored to meet the training requirements of healthcare professionals. You can find more information, including the programme [here](#) and register [here](#).

Sessional GPs Conference

Congratulations to Dr Mark Steggles and the Sessional GPs Committee on their sold-out Sessional GPs conference held last week at BMA House, where the focus was on respect, reward, retain. Attendees were given a whole host of tools and advice including how to set boundaries, considering the importance of the gender pay gap and understanding pensions as a sessional GP. There were also breakout sessions, which looked at knowing your contract, negotiation skills, working as a portfolio doctor and navigating professional regulations and complaints. The Sessional GPs Committee outlined the development of a workload toolkit that would soon be launched, together with the developments of the 'Dr Diary' app. Which will be shared with sessional members imminently.

Locum Pension Processes webinar

On Tuesday 3 October, 18:00-19:00, PCSE is hosting a webinar with support from NHS Pensions and the BMA to explain locum pension processes in detail including how to manage forms online. To find out more and to register for the event please visit the [Eventbrite page](#).

UK LMC Conference - May 2024 - Save the date

The UK LMC Conference 2024 will be held on **Thursday 23 and Friday 24 May 2024 in Newport, Wales**. The event will be taking place at the [Celtic Manor Resort](#). Further information will be circulated in due course, but in the meantime, please ensure that you save the date. In the meantime, if you have any queries please email info.lmconference@bma.org.uk.

Undergraduate GP Placement Survey

Medical Schools are currently struggling to identify adequate placement providers in general practice. University of Liverpool is running a [survey](#) which aims to identify the factors which affect a practice's decision to host undergraduate medical students. The data will be used by medical schools to identify drivers and barriers to medical student placements in general practice, to allow tailoring placement requirements appropriately and identify strategies to help practices overcome potential barriers. If you are interested in participating, please read the [Participant Information](#) sheet and complete the online survey [here](#) (it is fully anonymous and should take no longer than 5 minutes to complete). Please contact Dr Kathryn J Harrison (docthark@liverpool.ac.uk) for any queries.

GPC England committee pages and guidance for practices

Read more about the work of the [Committee](#) and practical guidance for [GP practices](#)
See the latest update on X (formerly Twitter) [@BMA_GP](#) and read about [BMA in the media](#)
Contact us: info.GPC@bma.org.uk

Read the last [GP bulletin](#)

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