

Worcestershire

Local Medical Committee Ltd

NEWSLETTER

31 January 2022

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Dear Colleagues,

GP pressures and GP appointment data

On the 13th December, the Prime Minister put out a call to arms, making the booster campaign the national priority in the fight against Omicron. General practice responded to the call and delivered 3.9 million vaccination appointments that month. We now know that this booster wall of defence kept our sickest and most vulnerable safe and out of harm's way. Yet again, GPs and their teams vaccinated this country out of crisis.

As a result, [GP Appointment Figures](#) for December were a staggering 20% (4.9 million) higher than two years ago, pre COVID. As well as vaccination rollout, GPs continued to care for patients with COVID and deliver the day-to-day care our communities need. In fact, 2021 saw GP practices in England book more appointments than ever before, with an unprecedented 367m appointments.

The growing burden on general practice is particularly stark given the [ongoing failure to deliver](#) on GP recruitment and declining GP numbers (with the equivalent of 1,756 fewer fully qualified full-time GPs compared to 2015), while at the same time the average number of patients each GP is responsible for has increased by around 16% - to more than 2000 - since 2015. GPs and their teams continue to work harder than ever, and this is simply unsustainable. Patients' and colleagues' health is ultimately at risk without a solution. As well as creating and delivering solutions to bolster the workforce, Government must urgently scrap unnecessary administrative tasks and other unachievable targets if we're to stand a fighting chance of getting on top of current demand. Without urgent action from

Government, the care GPs provide for their patients will inevitably deteriorate as they prioritise only the sickest, ultimately leading to a two-tier system.

Thank you to all our colleagues in general practice for this immense contribution.

Read [Full BMA Statement](#) by Dr Farah Jameel, GPC England chair.

Read more about [Pressures in NHS](#) in the BMA's newly published hub, which includes data on GP workforce and workload, and an analysis on pressures in general practice.

Fit testing of FFP2 and FFP3 respirators

[IPC \(Infection Prevention and Control\) Guidance](#) advises that clinicians seeing patients with any known or suspected respiratory infections should wear FFP3 respirators to prevent nosocomial transfer. It is also a requirement of the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) that FFP2 masks are fit-tested in the same way as FFP3 masks. HSE advises against the use of FFP2 unless we are in contingency measures as these provide a lesser filtration rate than FFP3.

GPC England (GPCE) has persistently made the case that COVID-19 is transmitted by airborne means and that effective respiratory protective equipment (RPE) is of vital importance to protect healthcare staff and our patients. GPC have worked hard with NHSE/I in order to protect our colleagues and patients. This latest guidance acknowledges these facts and provides a framework by which practices can access appropriate RPE.

Practices can access FFP respirators, including FFP3s, via the [PPE Portal](#) if they have risk assessed their environments and require these. In addition, practices can access fit-testing for their FFP respirators through their local commissioners, and CCGs have been informed that where risk assessments have shown it to be necessary, fit-testing should be provided by the CCG. NHSE/I have asked CCG/Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) to identify fit testing capacity that may be available in their system, to consider the need across the whole system and ensure demand is prioritized according to clinical need and the type of procedures that local providers are carrying out in line with IPC guidance.

A list of fit testing training providers is available [Link](#) and there is also additional support via two dedicated Fit Test Helplines for NHS / healthcare providers, which can be contacted on: 07376 304545 or 07376 304546. The legal duty is to take all reasonably practicable actions. If there is no availability of fit testing or there will be delay, risk is still reduced by moving from surgical masks to either FFP2 or FFP3 respirators.

Read our [Guideline](#) for practices to use, about making risk assessments and on infection control protocols.

Mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations – guidance for GPs and practices

The BMA has now published specific [Guidance for GPs and Practices](#)

in response to the new regulations that require all healthcare staff in England to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by April. GPC and the LMC continue to get a significant number of questions on this subject, and we are very aware of the anxiety that VCOD is causing

practices. It is not possible to give solutions for every single scenario, but the BMA have tried to address the most common questions.

This [guidance](#) will help answer your most common queries in regards to:

- who does it apply to and what the exemptions are
- defining patient-facing roles
- dealing with vaccine hesitant employees
- redeployment and dismissal
- contracts and agreements.

This sits alongside wider [BMA Guidance](#) published previously. Both sets of guidance should be read in conjunction with each other. The BMA will also be publishing a flowchart for practices dealing with unvaccinated staff, in the next few days, The guidance will be added to as more questions are asked and more information becomes available.

Face coverings in practice premises

As of 27 January, [Face Masks will no longer be a legal requirement](#) but people are still advised to wear coverings in enclosed or crowded spaces, and the [IPC Guidance for health settings](#) states that face masks should continue to be worn by staff and patients in health care settings.

[Practices should carry out risk assessments](#) and assess what level of respiratory protective equipment should be worn by different groups in various settings. Health and Safety law makes it your responsibility to protect staff and other patients based upon these risk assessments, thus making mask wearing a legal requirement if your risk assessment suggests masks should be worn. If challenged by patients not wanting to wear a mask GPC advises that you can refer to the [IPC Guidance](#) and your risk assessments and inform the patient that "the law imposes on me the duty to expect you to wear a mask, and on you the duty to wear one in these premises."

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

Health and Social Care Bill - #WrongBillWrongTime

The BMA, as a core member of a [coalition of almost 90 healthcare organisations, called on peers debating workforce elements of the Health and Social Care Bill](#) this week to support [Amendment 170](#), which would place a duty on the Secretary of State to publish regular, independently verified assessments of the workforce numbers needed, now and in the future, to meet the growing needs of the population.

The BMA's wider briefing warns that the NHS is still under huge pressure from the pandemic and it is [not the right time](#) to be reorganising the NHS. Read more about our concerns with the Bill [here](#).

BMA Mental Health and Wellbeing

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. Access the [BMA's COVID-19 wellbeing pages here](#).

The BMA has welcomed the NHSE/I [announcement](#) of further funding for the expanded and rapid access provision of mental health services for NHS staff in England over the winter. This is urgently required and something the BMA has been calling for to support the major challenges NHS staff are facing. At the ARM, a motion was passed expressing concern at the potential long-term impact of the pandemic and called for resources to support the profession. As we head into a second wave of the virus it is vital that staff are protected. [Find out more here.](#)

LMC WEBSITE

The following guidance has been added to the LMC website www.worcslmc.co.uk this week:

N/A

COVID 19 RESOURCES

[BMJ – news and resources](#)

[RCGP COVID-19 information](#)

[NHSE/I primary care bulletins](#)

[NICE resources](#)

Mentoring Support

A free mentoring service is available to GPs, Nurses and Practice Managers that offers professional and confidential mentoring support and signposting. Our mentors are a group of experienced, GPs, Nurses and PMs many of whom have educational roles and all of whom have been trained. They are here for you, just as you are there for your patients and colleagues. They can support you to work through personal and professional challenges that you may be facing. To find out more, now or at any time, please contact the Workforce Team GP Support Team

GP Support Team

The CCG and LMC have a well-established GP Support Team in place, whose main focus is to respond to and empower practices to make operational and team changes that address challenges they are facing in the short to medium term. The GP Support Team can be accessed via the LMC or Workforce Team. By connecting colleagues and sharing ideas, we hope to support practices in achieving their aims.

WORCESTERSHIRE AND HEREFORDSHIRE LMC LTD

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All topical issues relating to local general practice are discussed at the monthly LMC meetings and those minutes can be read on the LMC [Website](#). Should you require further information on any issues raised at the LMC meetings please do not hesitate to contact the LMC representative for your area or practice.

MEMBERS OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE COMMITTEE

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Dr K Gines |
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Dr R Khehar | WORCESTER: | Dr F Martin
Dr C Whyte
Dr R Benney |

Co-opted Representatives:

Out of Hours: Dr E Penny
Dispensing: Dr J Rankin
Registrars Rep: Dr J Chun (North)
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First5 Rep: Dr L Jones

IT Rep: Dr R Williams

Non Principals: Dr S Manton

Clinical Directors: Dr R Williams

EDI: Dr R Benney

Practice Manager Representatives:

Helen Garfield, Representative WF PM
Michelle Hallahan, Representative R&B PM
Meryl Foster, Representative SW PM

Worcestershire GPC Representative: Dr S Matthews

The next LMC meetings will be:

Worcestershire – 10 February 2022

