

Dear colleagues

Primary Care Network Package launch

We have launched a [PCN package of support](#) this week, based on what GPC, LMC and PCN colleagues told us they need during a series of roadshows, webinars, masterclasses and the PCN conference earlier this. It is flexible and wide-ranging and allows different PCNs and Clinical Directors to pick and choose the guidance, support and assistance they need. This includes access to a PCN community App, a forthcoming PCN Conference on 8 February 2020, a package of learning & development services and support for legal, HR and insurance issues. Read the blog about it by Krishna Kasaraneni, GPC England Executive team member [here](#)

Labour Party conference update

I attended the Labour Party Conference earlier this week, attended some events and had some useful conversations. At a RCGP fringe event, 'Wearables, Wifi and Workforce', I joined Jonathan Ashworth (Shadow Secretary of State for Health), Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard (Chair of RCGP Council) Ipsos Mori's Kate Duxberry and the Health Foundation's Sarah Deeny on the panel. I had a particularly useful conversation with Jonathan Ashworth about resolutions passed by the conference and his desire to see both investment in General Practice as well as improvements in access for patients. I also met with Julie Cooper MP (shadow health minister), where we discussed a range of issues linked to primary care, including establishing PCNs, pensions, premises, recruitment and retention and multidisciplinary teams.

Other useful meetings included Eleanor Smith MP (co-chair of APPG on social care), who talked about her APPG on social care and the importance of pushing social care in any debate on healthcare. We also discussed potential practice closures due to premise costs, the BMA's work re NHS Property Services, and GP pensions issues. Representatives from a number of medical royal colleges attend the conferences and I met with Professor Russell Viner, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) to talk about the link between primary care and paediatrics and how this could be strengthened through community developments within primary care networks.

Labour commitment to scrap prescription charges in England

It was announced at the Labour party conference on Saturday that the [next Labour government will abolish prescription charges in England](#) as part of the party's plans to expand universalism in public services. In response to this, Farah Jameel, GPC England executive team member said: "The BMA has repeatedly called for prescription costs to be abolished. Prescription charges can be a huge expense, particularly for patients living with long-term conditions. Getting rid of them will mean more people are able to take the medication they need without having to worry about how they make ends meet; how they choose between paying a bill and buying food or paying for their prescription."

This was reported by [Sky News](#), [Nursing Notes](#), [Yorkshire Post](#), [Pulse](#), [BMJ](#), [Pharmacy Magazine](#), [Training Matters](#), [P3Pharmacy](#) and the [Yorkshire Evening Post](#).

GP indemnity update

The Department of Health and Social Care has agreed the arrangements for the existing liabilities scheme (ELS) with Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland (MDDUS). This follows a similar agreement with MPS. Read more [here](#)

Capita - Incorrectly Archived Records

We recently released a statement regarding the PCSE incident whereby thousands of patient medical records were incorrectly archived instead of being sent to the subsequent GP practices. These records have now been sent back to practices, and NHS England is expecting those practices to undertake an assessment of harm for each patient affected. Practices affected will have received a list of NHS Numbers of the patients whose record was delayed.

GPC England was in discussions with NHS England to highlight the impact this would have on practices and their patients. We were clear that practices should receive the necessary support to cover the additional costs of dealing with a problem for which they are not to blame to ensure that GPs and other practice staff are not taken away from direct patient facing provision. Unfortunately, NHS England was not prepared to provide the amount of funding that we believe is necessary to cover GP and practice staff time required to do this assessment properly, and GPC England was not prepared to agree to a settlement which we believed would not fully compensate practices for the problems created by Capita.

As a result, we are looking for practices to join our potential legal action. Practices will need to complete the attached pro forma and send them to the BMA via info.gpc@bma.org.uk in order to sign up to the case. We will then collate the necessary information to take forward a legal action.

Digital-first primary care consultation outcome

NHS England and NHS Improvement has now published their response to the digital-first primary care consultation, where they sought views on options and proposals to change patient registration, payment and contracting rules. We have drafted a briefing for LMCs about it, which is attached.

Investment in GP Services in Northern Ireland

The Department of Health has announced [£26.76 million investment in GP Services in Northern Ireland](#) for 2019/20. In response to this, Alan Stout, Chair of GPC Northern Ireland said: "This funding announcement is good news for GPs, for primary care and for patients across Northern Ireland. The transformation money that has already been spent is beginning to make a difference for GPs, helping to ease their workload and allowing frontline services to patients to be spread across a range of health staff who are best suited to addressing a patient's needs. This increased investment will mean that more GP practices will be able to begin the process of transforming the way they deliver services." Read his full statement [here](#). This was also reported by [Onmedica](#) and [Pulse](#)

Drug shortages

GPonline reports that more than 100 drugs prescribed in primary care are now out of stock. In response to this I said that practices were facing additional workload because patients were frequently being forced to come back following appointments to request an alternative prescription. "It is having a serious impact. There is real uncertainty over whether common medicines are going to be available, and patients may have to return to their practice to get an alternative prescription, or go round lots of pharmacists looking for one that has a particular drug in stock." Read the full quote and article [here](#).

Supply issues for Provera and Fluoxetine

Please find attached updates on supply issues for Provera and Fluoxetine from the Department of Health and Social Care.

New regulations on notifications of death

For the first time, the Government has introduced regulations that place a duty on registered medical practitioners to notify the coroner of certain deaths, and what information should be provided. They apply to England and Wales, and become law on 1 October 2019. Read the Ministry of Justice's guidance on complying with the regulations [here](#)

Firearms guidance and flowchart

Our joint response to the Home Office consultation on statutory guidance to police on firearms licensing and a flowchart to guide GPs and police through the licensing process are now available on the [BMA website](#).

Statement from regulators on online primary care services

The General Pharmaceutical Council, the GMC and other UK regulators of healthcare services, medicines and health professionals have put out a joint statement on online primary care services and ensuring medicines are prescribed and dispensed safely and appropriately online. This cross regulatory forum are working to address regulatory gaps and to help improve the quality and safety of services, and develop an understanding of the benefits and risks of primary care services delivered online. The aims of the group, and links to existing guidance, is available [here](#).

Equality matters

This week, the BMA launched *Equality matters*, which is designed to promote equality for all medical students and doctors working in our health service and also within the BMA. On the programme's [web hub](#) you can find training resources, and:

- Find information on BMA lobbying and policy work supporting this agenda
- Hear from BMA members talking about why these principles are so important to them
- Read [a blog](#) from our chair of the Representative Body Helena McKeown on the BMA's work on championing equality, diversity and inclusion.

Read a blog by Chaand Nagpaul, BMA Chair of Council, [here](#), where he outlines why this programme is fundamental in the BMA's call to change the culture within the NHS and the BMA. Please send any feedback on how we can further the aims of this important programme to equalitymatters@bma.org.uk

Benefits for mixed aged pensioner couples

Following a DWP policy change certain pensioners in mixed age couples will have begun claiming working age benefits rather than pension age benefits. New [DWP guidance for GPs](#) issuing fit notes for these pensioners has been published.

Updated DWP guidance for GPs

The DWP have also recently updated their [Short guide to the benefit system for GPs](#) and their [guidance on factual medical reports](#)

New online procurement tool

NHS England and NHS Improvement are launching a new online procurement tool which will include a list of pre-approved GP providers that local commissioners can invite to deliver their local GP service needs, including caretaker services. This approach, known as Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing System (PDPS), is planned to be live from January 2020. A series of national engagement events are being held for local commissioners and GP providers. Find out more [here](#).

Committee visitors scheme for GPC Meetings

The BMA committee visitors scheme allows interested parties to participate as non-voting committee member of GPC, with the opportunity to attend meetings and take part in discussions. If you have not participated in BMA work before the scheme is an excellent opportunity to gain experience of what it is like to serve on a committee and contribute to the future of your profession. For further details, please visit the [BMA website](#)

LMC observers at GPC meetings

LMC observers are welcome to attend GPC meetings. If your LMC would be interested in sending an observer, please contact Kathryn Reece (kreece@bma.org.uk). A maximum of three LMC observers may attend any one meeting. The date for the 2019/20 session for GPC meetings are below. Meetings will commence at 10:00am and will usually finish at 5:00pm (never later than 6:00pm).

GPC England	Thursday 21 November 2019	BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP
GPC England	Thursday 16 January 2020	BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP
GPC UK	Thursday 19 March 2020	Wales – To be Confirmed
GPC England	Thursday 16 July 2020	BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP

Please note that all travel and other expenses for LMC observers should be met by the relevant LMC.

GP Retention Scheme

Read the [step-by-step guide for the GP retention scheme](#). The scheme offers support for GPs who are considering leaving the profession if they have no other options to reduce their hours. You can also view the NHS England video and guidance [here](#). If you have any difficulties, please get in touch by emailing sessionalGps@bma.org.uk

BMA Law conference – Supporting General Practice

Join BMA Law's specialist team for a series of immersive discussions providing advice on the running of your practice at their *Conference on Supporting General Practice*, on Thursday 31 October 2019, BMA House, London. From PCN governance to practice disputes, this is an excellent opportunity to meet their lawyers and learn about mitigating the legal pressures facing practices today. For further information and to sign up see the [BMA Law website](#)

Forensic and secure environments committee elections

The FSEC (forensic and secure environments committee) is holding an online election, which can be accessed via BMA's [elections page](#). The position for one doctor providing primary healthcare within forensic psychiatric hospitals in the UK remains vacant. If you are interested in this position, please email elections@bma.org.uk for more details.

Read the latest GPC newsletter [here](#).

Read the latest Sessional GPs newsletter [here](#)

Have a good weekend

Richard