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To:

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Improvement

Regional Primary Care Directors, NHS England and
NHS Improvement

Accountable Officers & Primary Care Leads
Clinical Commissioning Groups

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I am writing to you today to set out our continuing approach to regulation of primary medical services over the next few weeks and months (3 months). I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your work, professionalism and dedication over the last very challenging year. Your work has enabled people to continue to receive care in incredibly challenging circumstances.

Throughout the pandemic, our regulatory role has not changed. Our core purpose of providing the public with assurance that health and care services are safe has driven our decisions. As we have now entered another period of increased pressure on health and social care services it is only right that CQC continues to be flexible in our approach.

At the start of the pandemic we paused routine inspections and focused our activity only in response to risk. This was the right thing to do and we have kept this decision under review.

In response to the very latest position, we want to be clear that for the time being we will continue to only undertake inspection activity in response to a serious risk of harm or where it supports the system's response to the pandemic.

We will continue to act to keep people safe from harm, protecting their human rights while supporting providers to focus on delivering care, including the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

What this means

We will only undertake inspection activity that either helps create capacity to respond to COVID-19 or that responds to significant risk of harm to the public.

For primary medical services we will:

- only inspect in response to significant risk of harm – including concerns raised by people working in services and people using them – and when we cannot seek assurances through other routes. If an inspection is necessary, we will carry out as much activity off-site as possible.
- continue to work jointly with Ofsted to inspect Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services.
- monitor and review information from all available sources, collecting further information where necessary. Our inspectors will continue to listen to people who use services, their loved ones and people who work in health and social care, through our Give Feedback on Care service. Our monitoring also includes a review of all information shared through concerns, complaints, safeguarding allegations and whistleblowing allegations and is focused on understanding where there are risks to safety and human rights, so that we know where services need to improve.

We will monitor and inspect COVID-19 vaccination services based on risk. While we will be undertaking specific monitoring activity for the hospital trust-led mass vaccination centres, we will not be routinely doing this for the sites delivering the vaccine in primary care. It is therefore important that we are kept up to date with emerging risks in regard to the vaccine programme.

Additionally, we have paused our programme of [Provider Collaboration Reviews](#) and will restart only when it is appropriate to do so.

We continue to monitor and review the application of do not attempt cardiopulmonary resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

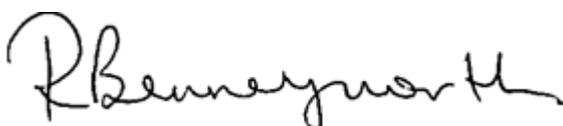
We will continue to adapt our approach and remain responsive as the situation changes.

Emerging risk

We do appreciate that the pandemic is presenting serious challenges to providers of primary medical services. The sharing of information with us regarding emerging risks is vital to ensure that we are appropriately responding, supporting providers, CCGs and system partners, doing all we can to reduce the pressures and avoiding duplication of requests. When we are informed of emerging and actual risks, as well as action being taken to mitigate risks, this provides us with assurance which we are then able to share with system partners.

Thank you again for all the work you do.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Inspector of Primary Medical Services and Integrated Care

CC:

- Professor Stephen Powis, National Medical Director, NHS England and NHS Improvement
- Amanda Pritchard, Chief Operating Officer, NHS England and NHS Improvement
- Dr Nikita Kanani, Medical Director of Primary Care, NHS England and NHS Improvement
- Professor Martin Marshall, Chair, Royal College of General Practitioners
- Dr Richard Vautrey, Chair, General Practitioner's Committee, British Medical Association
- Department of Health and Social Care