Dear Colleagues,

**Primary care networks**
Following the announcement of the [GP contract for England](https://www.gpc.org.uk/), Krishna Kasaraneni, GPC England Executive member, has written a [blog](https://www.gpc.org.uk/blog) about what practices should be considering with regards to the structures for Primary Care Networks. This follows on from his previous blog about PCNs. Further guidance and information relating to [GP contract](https://www.gpc.org.uk/gp-contract) will be published in the coming weeks.

**Access guidance**
GPC England has released additional guidance that provides an overview of all elements of the contract agreement which could change how patients will access primary care in the future and the impact of these changes on practices. You can read the access guidance [here](https://www.gpc.org.uk/access-guidance).

**GP Contract (England) Roadshows**
We also have over 30 roadshows and events lined up for the coming weeks to explain the contract changes for practices in England – see attached the updated list and the details are also available [here](https://www.gpc.org.uk/gp-contract-roadshows).

In addition various local events have been organised by a number of LMCs. The following have been added since last week:

- Londonwide LMC - 14 March
- Liverpool LMC – 26 March
- Cleveland LMC – 28 March
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland LMC 28 March
- Surrey and Sussex LMC -28 March
- Norfolk LMC – 2 April

**Electronic transfers of childhood vaccination data, potential GDPR breach**
We have received reports that LMCs in the [West Midlands](https://www.gpc.org.uk/policy/west-midlands) region have received communications from their local community trust with regards to changes to the process for electronic transfer of childhood vaccination and immunisations data from GP systems to Child Health Information Services. We believe this issue may also impact practices across [London](https://www.gpc.org.uk/policy/london) and [Southwest](https://www.gpc.org.uk/policy/southwest) regions and up to 3,300 practices. It is also possible that this issue may impact on other extraction services; we are in the process of clarifying this.

Having received legal advice, GPC England is concerned that practices using the new proposed-extraction system to share childhood immunisation data may be placing themselves in breach of the GDPR. We are seeking urgent clarification from NHS England. In the meantime, we would advise that practices do not sign up to this new system until our concerns have been addressed. If you are aware of practices being contacted directly and who may have since signed up, please let us know by emailing info.gpc@bma.org.uk. Please also see the BMA’s guidance on GDPR.

**GP at Hand**
We made clear our disappointment about the premature decision by NHS England and two CCGs to allow the digital GP provider GP at Hand, currently based in London, to expand its service to Birmingham. GP at Hand was initially blocked by NHS England and Hammersmith and Fulham CCG and Birmingham and Solihull CCG, but they lifted their objections after a meeting this week. The BMA’s concerns about the service centre on its use of out of area arrangements, which allow it to
provide online consultations to – and receive funding for – patients outside of its practice boundary. There are also concerns about the service’s safety, with an independent review yet to report back.

Responding to this I commented “We are incredibly disappointed with this decision, which is not only premature, but flies in the face of place-based care delivered by practices embedded in local communities, which the recent changes in the GP contract are committed to deliver.” You can read the full statement here. The story was covered by MailOnline, The Independent, Pulse, GP Online and HSJ.

Patients facing postcode lottery following GP closures
Mail online reported an analysis of NHS figures, carried out by GP online which revealed that almost one in six GP surgeries which existed in England in 2004 are no longer open. The number of patients at each practice had risen by 45 per cent as a result, from an average of 5,891 patients in 2004 to 8,533 today as the effects are creating a postcode lottery with patients having varied access to GP services. Commenting, I said: “Increasingly as single-handed GPs reach retirement age those practices are often being merged rather than put out to tender and smaller practices are deciding to merge – to gain a greater degree of resilience in larger groups and to share back office teams.” Read the article here.

GPs question fit notes’ effectiveness
I had a letter published in the Sunday Times in response to a piece in last week’s paper about whether fit notes should be scrapped. This follows the publication of a new book, Sick-Note Britain, by Dr Adrian Massey, in which the BMA’s ARM resolution from 2016 is referred to. I wrote: “The BMA’s GP members have consistently questioned the effectiveness of the system: last year 5.6m fit notes were issued in England, many taking up a GP appointment just for this. GPs will support patients in their return to work, but equally patients should be trusted in conversations with employers. A first step would be to extend self-certification from 7 to 14 days.”

Practices end unfunded services
Pulse reported on a group of eight GP practices in Buckinghamshire that have collectively agreed to stop providing unfunded non-core services due to concerns over workload. The group say they will stop providing seven different services, including ear syringing, 24-hour blood pressure monitoring and ECGs – by August at the latest. GPC England executive team workload lead Dr Farah Jameel said: “If work is done without appropriate funding, GPs are forced to stretch themselves to the extent that they risk the quality and safety of the essential service they are contracted to provide to their patients. Examples such as this are not about restricting GP services. They are about providing safe, quality and accessible care to patients.”

Practice premises scheme in Scotland
A new interest free loan scheme for practice premises in Scotland has been given another £20million in funding from the Scottish Government, after pressures from the BMA. Under the initiative, funding is available for up to 20% of the practice’s value and is repayable when the premises are no longer used for providing primary care for the NHS, or when they are sold. Dr Andrew Buist, Chair of Scottish GPC, said: “At the heart of the new GP contract introduced last year was a clear aim to make becoming a GP a more attractive career choice and encourage more people into working in this part of the profession. Key to that is reducing risk and financial burdens around choosing to be a GP. This funding is a great example of this principle in action – and the practical benefits that the contract has secured for GPs. I am sure it will make a real difference for GPs across Scotland, as the popularity of the scheme has shown. While there is still much work to do to transform what it means to be a GP, I believe that through the new contract we are finally restoring hope to the profession.” Read the Evening Express article here.
Pensions blog
Krishan Aggarwal, Deputy Chair of the Sessional GPs subcommittee, has written a blog focusing on the Type 2 forms for Sessional GPs. Read the blog here

LMC UK conference representatives to GPC UK elections
Nominations for seven representative positions on GPC UK for the 2019-2020 session, one seat of which is reserved for a GP who has never sat on GPC UK before, will open on 19 February. You do not need to be a LMC representative or LMC UK conference member to stand, GPs throughout the country may put themselves forward. To find out more, including how to nominate yourself, click here. The elections will take place using the BMA’s online election system. The deadline for completed nominations to be received is 12pm Tuesday 12 March. If you have any questions regarding the election process please contact elections@bma.org.uk.

GPC UK regional representative elections
Voting for a number of regional representative positions on GPC UK for the 2019-2022 sessions will open on 19 February. To find out more, including what seats voting is open in and how to vote, click here. The elections will take place using the BMA’s online election system. The deadline for voting is 12pm Tuesday 12 March. If you have any questions regarding the election process please contact elections@bma.org.uk.

Conference of Medical Academic Representatives - 29 March
Registrations are open for the BMA’s conference of medical academic representatives (COMAR) on Friday 29 March at BMA House. It is the BMA’s policy forum for medical academics and GPs with an academic component to their training or employment are welcome to attend. Find out more here

Read the latest GPC newsletter here

Read the latest Sessional GPs newsletter here.

Have a good weekend.

Richard