

9 August 2019

Dear Colleagues

Letter to Prime Minister on practice premises funding

In an article for the [Sunday Times](#), the Prime Minister pledged a further £1.8bn in funding for capital projects, with a focus on hospitals. In response to this, the BMA's chair of council, Chaand Nagpaul, said "If the Prime Minister is serious about improving care and tackling waiting times he must give patients reassurance that senior hospital doctors and GPs will be able to continue to provide care, and not be forced out by absurd taxes on their pensions that mean all too often they are paying to go to work." He also said that that the funding was a 'step forward' and that 'more funding must be made available to address the impoverished state of general practice buildings so that there is increased capacity for GP staff and services'. Dr David Wrigley, deputy chair of BMA council, said: "We do huge amounts of work is done in general practice and most GP surgeries bursting at the seams got no space to deal with patients and see patients and the fact that this announcement doesn't even mention General Practice is very disappointing for GPs."

I have written a letter to the Prime Minister (attached), co-signed by the RCGP, Patients Association, the National Association of Primary Care and the Family Doctor Association, calling for urgent action to ensure that vital capital funding is allocated for primary care premises. This follows our [premises survey](#) that showed that only half of practices considered their premises to be fit for present needs, falling to just over 2 in 10 practices when asked if they thought their premises were fit for the future. In addition the recent NHS England GP premises review which GPC England were part of also concluded that significant additional funding is required for primary care premises. If the government is to deliver on the new Prime Minister's commitment to improve access to general practice appointments, then long overdue investment in premises must be a priority.

Read the BMA press release [here](#). This was also reported in the [Sunday Express](#), [BBC](#), [Daily Mail](#), [The i](#), [Daily Mirror](#), Financial Times (subscription required), The Telegraph (front page) and [GP Online](#).

Pensions reform

The Government has announced a number of proposed [changes to improve the NHS Pension scheme](#), including a consultation on pension flexibility, a commitment to review the impact of the Annual Allowance taper and guidance to employers setting out how existing flexibilities can be used to ensure doctors do not lose out.

The BMA has led the campaign against damaging tax legislation and in response to the announcement, Chaand Nagpaul, BMA council chair, said: "We acknowledge this step forward by the Government", however, he went on to say "The new proposed flexibilities will provide short-term relief for many doctors, but they themselves do not tackle the core and underlying problem. This lies in tax reform, and as we have said before, it is the overhaul of the annual allowance and tapered annual allowance, that will make a difference to all doctors, including consultants, GPs and medics in the Armed Forces." Read the full statement [here](#).

I spoke about the impact of the pensions crisis in General Practice during an interview on LBC Radio on Saturday morning and also on TalkRadio on Wednesday. I said that doctors both in General Practice and in hospitals were being forced to reduce their working commitments, and "There has to be action taken. It's important to retain skills of all doctors and we want to ensure that young and old doctors give their best and are able to work in a way they feel able to and are not constrained by

bizarre pension rules."

Digital first consultation response

The [NHS England consultation on Digital First](#) is open until 31 August and we would encourage LMCs to respond. GPC England has now submitted a response, which can be accessed [here](#). The paper sets out proposed changes to patient registration, funding and contracting rules and makes suggestions for tackling workforce shortages, particularly in under-doctored and deprived communities. The GPC England response makes clear the out of area regulations should be withdrawn as they allow digital providers to profit by prioritising largely healthy patients and short-term care rather than delivering a comprehensive service for patients with more healthcare needs and providing continuity of care for all in a local population.

Primary Care Network data templates (England)

NHS England has published a Data Sharing and Data Processing template for PCNs, jointly agreed with GPC England, which are available on the [NHS England GP contract page](#) (in the 'Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service' section). Whilst the use of these templates is not mandatory, and PCNs remain free to enter into different forms of data sharing and data processing agreements, their aim is to help PCNs developing their data sharing and processing activities when delivering services under the Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service. BMA guidance on this will be available shortly.

Patient survey (England)

NHS England has published its latest [GP Patient Survey](#), which assesses patients' experiences of healthcare services provided by GP practices, including experience of access, making appointments, quality of care, use of care plans and experience of services when their GP practice is closed. In addition, NHS England have developed information packs for CCGs presenting the latest results specific for local areas. We have produced a short presentation with some of the key data and infographics produced for this information pack, which is attached for you to use.

NICE medicinal cannabis consultation

Pulse has reported on the NICE consultation on their [draft guidance on prescribing medicinal cannabis](#), which proposes to introduce shared care agreements, in which the initial prescriber is a specialist doctor and then the subsequent prescriber could be healthcare professionals, including GPs. In response to this, I said: "This is a new and specialist area of treatment and prescribing. As such it requires specialist teams to be involved in properly assessing, and then if appropriate, treating and monitoring relevant patients. This would be the case for any very specialist drug. The way to improve access to this assessment and treatment is to properly resource specialist services and enable hospital services to access electronic prescribing systems." The GPC and BMA will be responding on the consultation. Read the full article in [Pulse](#).

GPC policy groups update

I am pleased to announce the following GPC UK policy lead appointments:

Preeti Shukla – Clinical and Prescribing

Chandra Kanneganti – Commissioning and Provider Development and Working at Scale

Julius Parker – Contracts and Regulation

Samira Anane – Education, Training and Workforce

Anu Rao – Information Management, Technology and Information Governance

Gaurav Gupta – Premises and Practice Finance

I am sure you will join me in congratulating the new leads on their appointment and support them during their term.

Both Bruce Hughes (policy lead for Representation) and David Bailey (policy lead for Dispensing) still have one more year of their terms to complete.

Medicine supply update August

Please see attached the latest monthly update on supply issues from the Department of Health and Social Care's Medicines Supply Team.

Forensic and Secure Environments Committee elections

The BMA's Forensic and Secure Environments committee is looking for a representative doctor providing primary healthcare within a forensic psychiatric hospital in the UK. The seat is for the 2019-20 session only. To nominate and vote in the election, you must be a BMA member and a doctor providing primary healthcare within a forensic psychiatric hospital in the UK. You have until 15 August to nominate via the elections website <http://elections.bma.org.uk>

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

Have a good weekend

Richard