



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER – 31st March 2021

EXTRAORDINARY COVID-19 UPDATE

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1. COVID-19 one year on – Message from Dr Richard Vautrey - Chair of the British Medical Association's General Practitioners Committee.

Last week marked one year since the first UK lockdown was introduced in order to combat the spread of COVID-19 and the fight back, with the help of the vaccination roll-out, is gathering speed. It is though concerning that national daily case numbers have stopped falling and in some areas are rising again. There is clearly some way to go in dealing with the pandemic.

The vaccination effort started only a few short months ago, and more than half of the adult population in the UK have already received at least one dose of the vaccine. It is an incredible achievement to have reached such a significant milestone so quickly. Thank you to all involved in this vitally important task which has been achieved whilst at the same time managing many other workload pressures.

Practices across the nation have been working together in groups, often in PCNs (primary care networks) to deliver the vaccination programme locally. Ever since we started, we have been vaccinating people come rain or shine. Even when snowstorms tried to put a spoke in the wheel, armies of volunteers rallied with shovels, clearing snow in car parks, and enabling people to get to their appointments.

The vaccine roll-out demonstrates the value of general practice. GPs, by the very nature of their contractual arrangements, are incredibly adaptive, flexible, and responsive to new situations. They understand their patients and their communities. If you give practices the necessary resources and the flexibility to get on with it, that's what we will do. And that is exactly what has happened.



2. Support for CCGs in addressing vaccine inequalities

In February, £4.2 million of funding was allocated to STPs to be used across CCGs to support and enable locally led community engagement in all areas with health inequalities. NHSE/I has now pledged an [additional £3 million of funding](#) to support further local activity in addressing local vaccine inequalities. From 26 March, regions are invited to submit funding applications for their CCGs. Read more [here](#)

3. Certificate for volunteers who supported the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

[A certificate](#) has been produced for local systems to adapt and present to their volunteers as a thank you for dedicating their time to support delivering COVID vaccinations. The certificate is signed by Dr Nikki Kanani.

4. COVID-19 vaccination programme

As was reported last week, there will be a [reduction of supply](#) of COVID-19 vaccinations from this week for about four weeks due to reductions in national inbound vaccines supply. The BMA have been told that this should not impact the delivery of second doses. Vaccinations sites are encouraged to continue their efforts in maximising uptake in cohorts 1-9 which are yet to be vaccinated.

The BMA are expecting a statement from JCVI shortly on details relating to the next phase of vaccination for groups 10-12 and we will share this with you once received.

5. Quality Assurance Framework and SOP for lateral flow devices for COVID-19 vaccination sites

NHSE/I has published a [Quality Assurance Framework for COVID-19 vaccination sites](#), to use as a tool aligned to the operating frameworks and standard operating procedures underpinning the delivery models for these settings.

NHSE/I has also published a [Standard Operating Procedure \(SOP\) for usage of lateral flow devices for asymptomatic NHS staff testing](#) at vaccination sites.



6. Frequently Asked Questions for second doses

NHSE/I has published some [FAQs to help answer some questions relating to second doses of the COVID-19 vaccination](#), including location of second doses, interval period and consent.

7. COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy

There has been some confusion around the eligibility of pregnant women for the COVID-19 vaccine. While it is not currently available to all pregnant women, those who are at high risk of exposure to the virus, including health and care workers, or with high-risk medical conditions *are* eligible. This includes women diagnosed with gestational diabetes in pregnancy or those with a BMI of more than 40 at their antenatal booking appointment.

The benefits and risks of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy should be discussed on an individual basis. The discussion should include acknowledgement that, while there is no known risk associated with giving other non-live vaccines to pregnant women, there is no specific data as yet about the safety of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy. More information including FAQs and a decision aid are available from the [RCOG website](#).

In addition, the National Clinical Director for Maternity and Women's Health, and the Chief Midwifery Officer, have published a [letter setting out actions for maternity services to identify and invite pregnant women for vaccination](#), and enabling them to make an informed choice about receiving it.

8. BMA COVID-19 Vaccination Guidance

Read more about the latest changes, including the delivery of second doses, added funding, and what practices need to do and the support available in the BMA's updated [guidance page about the COVID-19 vaccination programme](#).

Please note that the LMC are unable to accept calls or hold communications with patients, we are GP representatives, and we would respectfully ask that Practices do not advise patients to contact us. Could we also remind Practices that any copies of patient related correspondence MUST be anonymised as the LMC cannot accept patient identifiable data.

Please note our office contact times remain 10:00-16:00 and any queries on the day should be directed to birmingham.lmc@nhs.net as we are currently remote working so would be grateful if all contact were made via the nhs.net email.



Helpful Links:

BMA COVID-19: toolkit for GPs and GP practices <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/gp-practices/covid-19-toolkit-for-gps-and-gp-practices> Comprehensive guidance for GPs, partners, and practice managers to manage employment and contractual issues and service provision during the coronavirus pandemic.

GOVERNMENT WEBSITE: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for recent and upcoming changes, guidance & support.

NHS ENGLAND: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/implementing-phase-3-of-the-nhs-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic/>