



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER – 25th May 2021

EXTRAORDINARY COVID-19 UPDATE

- ❖ [Increase of age range invited for COVID-19 Vaccination](#)
- ❖ [COVID-19 vaccination: accelerating second doses for priority cohorts 1-9](#)
- ❖ [Additional funding for accelerated second doses](#)
- ❖ [Updated Enhanced Service Specification](#)
- ❖ [Storage of Pfizer vaccine](#)
- ❖ [BMA media campaign 'Spread the word, not the virus'](#)
- ❖ [Guidance for vaccination centres to ensure access to people with dependent children](#)
- ❖ [COVID-19 BMA weekly summary data](#)
- ❖ [Forced labour in international PPE supply chains through COVID-19 – issues and solutions](#)
- ❖ [Vote of no confidence in NHS England leadership](#) - **GENERAL UPDATE**

1. Increase of age range invited for COVID-19 Vaccination

As of 20.05.2021, [34 and 35-year-olds](#) will receive texts inviting them to book a COVID vaccination via the national booking service, at an NHS vaccination centre, pharmacy or GP vaccination site.

2. COVID-19 vaccination: accelerating second doses for priority cohorts 1-9

Following the recommendation by JCVI that reducing the dosing interval to help protect the nation from the COVID-19 B.1.617.2 variant, the [Government has instructed](#) that appointments for a second dose of a vaccine **will be brought forward from 12 to 8 weeks** for the remaining people in the top nine priority groups who have yet to receive their second dose. People should continue to attend their second dose appointments, and nobody needs to contact the NHS. The NHS will let those who should bring their appointment forward know, when they are able to do so.

Vaccination sites will receive an increase of the AstraZeneca vaccine to support with rescheduling second dose appointments.



3. Additional funding for accelerated second doses

The [letter from NHSE/I](#) promised additional financial support would be made available to vaccination centres to cover the administration costs of this activity and last week the BMA pushed for this to be made. NHSE/I has now published [Further details on the support available for PCN-led sites](#), including CCGs and ICSs to bring in additional workforce where possible, and additional payment of £1,000 for PCN groupings for rescheduling second dose appointments on or after 25 May 2021. They have also updated their [FAQs on providing second doses](#).

4. Updated Enhanced Service Specification

The [Enhanced Service Specification](#) for the COVID-19 vaccination programme 2020/21 has been updated to introduce a 3 month maximum period within which payment claims must be made, a change to restrict PCN groupings to using a single Point of Care system, as well as a change to permit the administration and payment claim of a single dose vaccine.

5. Storage of Pfizer vaccine

Following [reports by the European Medicines Agency](#) that the approved storage period in a fridge for the Pfizer vaccine could be extended from days to weeks, the [MHRA has approved](#) new storage conditions for the vaccine, extending the length of time the thawed vaccine can be stored at normal fridge temperatures from 5 days to 31 days. NHSE/I has also published a [letter](#) about the change to shelf life of the Pfizer vaccine when stored in refrigerators at 2-8C. This change makes a big difference to the remaining vaccination campaign and potentially simplifies the giving of boosters at the same time as flu vaccines later in the year. However, work still needs to be done on trying to reduce pack sizes. The BMA have also questioned again, the continued need for a 15-minute observation period after vaccination.

6. BMA media campaign 'Spread the word, not the virus'

The BMA has launched a [social media campaign to encourage a better uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations amongst communities from minority ethnic backgrounds](#).

Working with a group of influential social media creators, who have developed short video posts for Instagram, it is hoped that the campaign will pass on the message that everyone who can be, needs to be vaccinated so that the risk of infection and illness reduces, and life can get back to normal. Find out more [here](#).



7. Guidance for vaccination centres to ensure access to people with dependent children

The BMA have welcomed guidance recently published to ensure that people are not turned away from vaccination centres because they attend with dependent children – and have called for it to be publicised more widely.

They intervened after a junior doctor on maternity leave was refused entry at a hospital vaccination site because she was carrying her three-month-old baby. Details of the case can be read [here](#).

8. COVID-19 BMA weekly summary data

The BMA weekly summary of COVID-19 data, including information on the backlog of NHS work in each nation is attached (Enc.1)

9. Forced labour in international PPE supply chains through COVID-19 – issues and solutions

The BMA has been a leading voice in fair and ethical trade for more than 15 years, speaking out against modern slavery and labour rights abuses in the production of medical supplies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a surge in demand for PPE globally. At the same time, labour rights concerns about the production of PPE have been gaining traction in the media. Following on from the BMA's 2016 report [In good hands: Tackling labour rights concerns in the manufacture of medical gloves](#), it is timely to look again at the issue.

Join this free online event where the BMA will present the latest findings from a project at the University of Newcastle on endemic forced labour in the medical gloves sector (funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council and the Modern Slavery Policy & Evidence Centre). There will also be an opportunity to discuss what future steps can be taken to ensure transparency and accountability in international supply chains for medical goods.

The online event is open to members, policy makers, academics, and individuals with an interest in healthcare procurement and will take place on **Thursday 1 July, 10-12**. Register [here](#).



10. Vote of no confidence in NHS England leadership

As lockdown measures are easing to various extents across the UK and the [BMA urging 'utmost caution'](#), GPs in England are understandably angry after receiving the letter from NHSEI recently about face to face appointments and seeing walk-in patients in advance of an updated SOP whilst the [Government's guidelines](#) still recommend social distancing in healthcare settings, and at the same time asking for second doses of COVID vaccinations to be brought forward, causing enormous pressure on general practice.

If it has not been evident to government, media or the public before now, it is now clear beyond doubt that general practice is under immense strain as a result of significant and unsustainable workload pressures and are delivering a far greater [number of consultations](#) (3m more) than they did at the same time two years ago, before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This not only follows the serious impact of the pandemic and the hugely impressive involvement of GPs and their teams in delivering the COVID vaccination programme so quickly and effectively, but also the major scale of the NHS backlog and that GP recruitment and retention is still nowhere near at the levels we need, and your government has pledged to address. Added to this, demand for our services has increased significantly through the use of additional means of communicating with patients through the growing use of online consultations.

As stated in Dr Vautrey's [address](#) to the UK LMC Conference, general practice has been through a hard and difficult time that has left many physically exhausted and mentally drained. It has tested every GP team and individual like never before. But it has shown the profession at its best. We have been there for our patients. We have not let them down. We have responded to this unprecedented situation and we have risen to and met the challenge. The hard work and dedication of so many people in general practice has saved countless lives and the nation owes you all a huge debt of gratitude.

The media headlines of recent days and the subsequent [letter](#) relating to the NHSE/I's [Standard Operating Procedures](#) (published last week) understandably left many GPs and practice teams demoralised, angry and feeling that the immense workload pressures that practices are currently experiencing is not recognised or appreciated. Practices need help and support not condemnation and criticism. **Note that this is guidance and not contractual. It is for practices to determine how they meet the reasonable needs of their patients.**

The BMA have already expressed their very deep concern to NHSE/I about the contents of their letter, and they have been candid about how it has been received by the profession and they have also [written to the Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock MP](#), calling for the Government to provide urgent support to general practice and clarity to practices and patients about the expectation to deliver more face-to-face appointments and enable walk-in patients whilst also maintaining safe waiting and reception areas, and asks for an urgent meeting to discuss this. This follows an urgent meeting that was had last week to discuss the situation with Health Minister in England, Jo Churchill MP. Read the BMA press statement [here](#).

The GPC England discussed and passed an Emergency Motion of no confidence in the leadership of NHS England. The motion also demands an explanation from the Government as to why the letter was sent and an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. As a result, the committee has now ceased all formal meetings with NHSE/I and this will continue until sufficient steps have been taken to give the committee confidence to justify a resumption in such meetings. Read the full [statement](#) here.

The BMA are calling for an end to this management-by-directive approach which is not appropriate at this stage of the pandemic. **To reiterate, such guidance is not contractual, and it is for practices, as independent contractors, to determine how they meet the reasonable needs of their patients, and how they organise their appointment and access arrangements.**

A Summary of press and news can be seen here: [BMA reflects anger of the profession and calls for an urgent meeting and support for general practice \(bma-mail.org.uk\)](#)



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 can not 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/>