



Addresses

For Action

GP practices

For Information

Scottish General Practitioners Committee
Primary Care Leads NHS Boards

Policy Enquiries to:

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Dear Colleague

General Practice Recovery and Remobilisation

As we look forward to a greater easing of restrictions I am writing to you with information on work we are doing to support General Practice and the wider primary care teams through this period of recovery and remobilisation and into what will become the 'new reality or new normal'.

We recognise how hard everybody has worked over the last year and the significant pressure on general practice and your teams in difficult and challenging times, but there have also been opportunities to develop new innovative ways of working to support patients to access care. The introduction of telephone triage, the use of Near Me and Asynchronous Consulting are just some examples of practices responding flexibly and innovatively to new ways of working.

We want to build on this work to support practices to continue to deliver high quality person centred care that meets the needs of patients. Some of this work and areas for consideration in the future have been highlighted in the recent CMO report [Realistic Medicine – Shared decision making, reducing harm, waste and tackling unwarranted variation](#)

Guidance

The Public Health Scotland Primary Care guidance [Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Guidance for primary care \(windows.net\)](#) was updated on 1st April 2021 and now says:

Access for Patients

7.1 Patients who, following telephone assessment, do not meet the possible case definition for COVID-19, and who require further face to face meeting/consultation, should be advised to attend the healthcare facility/premises for further management.

This does not mean that all patients should be seen face to face, and while we remain in the pandemic, social distancing and other infection control measures should remain in place, but we would like to encourage practices to consider who and when patients should be seen face to face, and how to effectively communicate this with your patients, based on the principles of Realistic Medicine and shared decision making. We continue to hear feedback from patients who are struggling to understand when they can and can't see a health professional face to face and signposting them to the information on NHS Inform/ Community services page might be helpful. [Your community health care services | NHS inform](#)

We are also working with the ALLIANCE on the learning from the recent work they have done on patients experience of accessing care during the pandemic. [Health, Wellbeing and the COVID-19 Pandemic – Our Findings - Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland \(alliance-scotland.org.uk\)](#). This highlighted the many positive experiences patients have had accessing care but also some examples of less than positive experiences for patients and staff. As we move forward it is important that we all engage and communicate with patients about what, how and why services are being delivered both at a national and local level. We are running a Teams live event at the end of April will give you more information on the findings from this work and also what practical steps we are planning nationally and what you can do locally to address some of these issues.

We are working with NES, HIS and other key stakeholders such as SGPC (BMA), RCGP and the ALLIANCE to develop guidance, FAQs, toolkits etc. to support practices in areas such as infection control, PPE guidance as we move out of lockdown. Current medium and high risk recommendations for PPE in community settings are set out in the [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Scottish COVID-19 Community Health and Care Settings Infection Prevention and Control Addendum](#)

This work will be supported by a series of Teams Live events (previously webinars) run by Scottish Government, NES and HIS with the first one planned for **28th April, 1-2pm**. The Title for this event is:

General Practice – the future! What does the new reality look like? Meeting the needs of patients and the practice team?

Further information to follow. If there are particular areas where you and your team would welcome support, training or guidance as we move out of lockdown please let us know or contact Charlotte.Leggatt@nhs.scot.

COVID Status Certification (Covid Passports)

We understand that you are all receiving a significant number of queries from patients about this matter at the moment. Work on this is progressing but in the meantime Health Boards have been advised to use the following public lines on their websites/ social media etc.:

- *Please do not contact your GP Practice to ask for a Covid vaccination passport or status certificate – they will not be able to provide any standard document. International certification standards have not yet been agreed.*
- *The Scottish Government is working to support the re-opening of international travel once it is safe to do so. We are working with the other UK Nations and with the World Health Organisation to agree on potential future COVID certification requirements for international travel.*
- *As part of this, we are developing a technical solution that could allow people to access their Covid vaccination status directly*

You may wish to also put these lines on your own practice websites, social media accounts etc. We will continue to update you as work on this progresses.

COVID Funding

Further to PCA(M)(2020)06 and related circulars, I am also writing to advise you that Advance Funding for GP practices' reasonable COVID-19 expenses will continue into 2021-22 financial year. Funding will continue to be supplemented for practices where necessary and any required reconciliations will be made at the end of that financial year.

This has been agreed with SGPC (BMA). Any queries regarding this should continue to be sent to your local primary care management team.

Conclusion

The next few months are going to continue to be busy for us all, and I just want to take this opportunity again to reiterate the importance of looking after your own well-being and that of your teams. There are a number of resources available to support staff [Managers - PRoMIS | National Wellbeing Hub for those working in Health and Social Care](#) but it is just as important that staff take their annual leave and have time to rest and recuperate.

Thank you again for the invaluable hard work you and your teams have done and continue to do.

Yours sincerely



Fiona Duff
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Chair, GP DACS Steering Group.