

Primary Care Directorate  
General Practice Division



### Addresses

#### For Action

Chief Executives NHS Boards  
GP Practices

#### For information

Scottish General Practitioners Committee  
Primary Care Leads NHS Boards  
NHS National Services Scotland

### Policy Enquiries to:

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22 February 2021

Dear colleague

### COVID SPECIAL LEAVE

1. I write to outline how the commitments given in [DL\(2020\)30](#) apply to GPs and practice staff who have contracted COVID.

### Background

2. The Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport has confirmed that all NHS employees who have contracted COVID-19 and are off sick should be on COVID Special Leave and should receive full pay until they return to work, for as long as the arrangements in [DL\(2020\)30](#) are in place.
3. In April 2020 the General Medical Services Statement of Financial Entitlement ("the SFE") was updated to reflect the arrangements for sickness leave reimbursement costs for locums. Previously these costs would be reimbursed from day 15 but this change to the SFE meant that claims would be reimbursed from day 1, in recognition of the additional pressure COVID-19 could have on practice headcount. Given the reduction in cases over the summer of 2020, the change was reversed on **28th July 2020**. However, Scottish Government agreed with BMA Scottish GP Committee that we would reintroduce the change from **15th October 2020**<sup>1</sup>. This means that practices can claim sickness leave reimbursement costs for locums from day 1 of the absence.

### Absences over six months

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<sup>1</sup> The dates provided in this paragraph are the accurate dates and correct the error made in [PCA\(M\)\(2020\)16](#).

4. Practices claiming reimbursement for GP performers on sick leave should do so using the arrangements in the SFE. Where GP performers who have contracted COVID have been off longer than 6 months, the practice should claim the half the full amount of the sum the Health Board and practice have agreed is initially payable as reimbursement for locum costs under the SFE and claim any remaining costs of hiring a locum as an Additional Cost against their advance funding. This should be clearly specified when submitting claims to their Health Board.

### **Full Pay**

5. As GP practice income has been protected from the onset of the pandemic and all practices have been provided with advance funding, supplemented as necessary, to cover the costs of backfilling absent staff, all practices are in a position to provide **full pay** to partners and staff who are absent due to contracting COVID.

### **Statement of Financial Entitlements**

6. [PCA\(M\)\(2020\)12](#) stated that the Scottish Government intended to issue a revised Statement of Financial Entitlement which would come into backdated effect from 28th July 2020 and would reintroduce the requirement for approval in advance of reimbursement for GP performer sickness leave.
7. As that change was subsequently reversed Scottish Government does not intend to issue a revised SFE. The current SFE will continue in effect until the new financial year.

### **Action**

8. NHS Boards are requested to ensure that their primary medical services contractors are aware of this guidance.

### **Enquiries**

9. In the instance of any enquiries on this circular please contact Michael Taylor.

Yours sincerely



Interim Director of Primary Care  
Primary Care Directorate