Primary Care Directorate

General Practice Division

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**For Action**

GP practices

**For Information**

Scottish General Practitioners Committee

Primary Care Leads NHS Boards

29 December 2020

Dear Colleagues

**Update for Primary Care**

1. As we have moved into national Level 4 restrictions (in most areas of Scotland) from 26th December, we are writing to update you on the latest developments.
2. We also wanted to once again thank you for all you have done over the last year, and continue to do. Thanks also to those colleagues who have volunteered to work in our of hours or community assessment centres over the holiday period.
3. During this next phase in the pandemic, we will continue to prioritise vaccine delivery, test and protect, Covid-19 pathways, urgent care and cancer, whilst support for planned care will continue wherever possible. The Scottish Government has written to all Health Boards confirming that Boards can, where necessary, pause all non-urgent elective and routine services during January and February 2021 to help free up capacity to manage pressures. The expectation remains that Boards have the discretion to maintain what planned services they can, where these can be delivered safely and effectively. We realise that pausing this work places pressure on practices as worried patients contact them for advice, and we have reminded Boards that they need to work on communications and engagement with patients to ease this pressure. Boards have been asked to write to all patients to explain these arrangements, and to try to ensure that patients contact the specific service should they be waiting for a prolonged period of time.
4. Recognising the importance of practices being able to continue manage access and demand according to local needs and circumstances, the existing escalation processes on suspension of practice services (as set out in PCD [2](https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/pca/PCA2020(M)02.pdf) and [20](https://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/pca/PCA2020(M)10.pdf)) remain in effect. We recognise that the increased pressure practices will face may require practices to move into a higher level, and encourage you to continue to work closely with your local primary care teams and LMC to ensure early communication of practice difficulties.
5. In addition, where a practice requires to reduce the services it provides, we remain committed to ensuring financial stability for practices at this time.
6. Other measures taken include recently issued guidance on practice registrations, and the CMO issuing a letter to act as a fit note for those who reside in level four and are shielding, and so the fit note does not need to be issued by the GP.
7. To support all primary and secondary care staff we are proactively engaging with colleagues in Education and Local Government to promote maximum availability of childcare, nursery and school support arrangements for key workers in the New Year, to better enable staff to balance work and family commitments.
8. We will also continue to work with our colleagues in SGPC, RCGP, the Academy of Royal Colleges and Board Primary Care Leads to ensure you remain involved in local decision making, and are kept informed locally, regionally and nationally.
9. Thank you once again for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Primary Care Directorate

Scottish Government