



**For Action**

Chief Executives  
NHS Boards Primary Care Leads

**For Information**

Scottish General Practitioners Committee

28 March 2022

**Policy Enquiries to:**

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Dear Colleagues

1. I write to provide an update on various arrangements made for general practice during the pandemic.
2. The key message for GP practices is:
  - While the Advance Funding arrangements are closed, Health Boards should continue to cover the costs of backfilling absent staff and record their costs as arising from COVID-19.

**GP Practices – Additional Funding – COVID-19 – reconciliation**

3. On 7 April 2020, the Scottish Government announced Additional Funding to be shared across all GP practices for the period from 3rd March 2020 to recognise the pressure on General Practice caused by COVID-19. PSD informed practices by email of their share. These payments were made to practices by PSD in the week beginning 13 April 2020.
4. [PCA\(M\)\(2020\)06](#) noted that practices with high COVID-19 related costs might require further advance funding, if they had used their share of the Additional Funding before the end of June 2020. Where practices were experiencing cash flow difficulties, Scottish Government advised that they could approach their Health Board/ PSD and request a further advance of funding. We advised that this further advance would be part of the reconciliation process in July 2020.
5. [PCA\(M\)\(2020\)09](#) recognised that COVID-19 related expenses might continue beyond July 2020 and that PSD would not make any recoveries of unused funding in July 2020. Practices were advised that a further reconciliation exercise, if needed, would happen at the end of the financial year in March 2021. That reconciliation exercise did not occur.

6. I can confirm that PSD will now carry out a reconciliation exercise at the end of this financial year in **March 2022**. This will bring the Advance Funding arrangements to a close.
7. [PCA\(M\)\(2021\)03](#) outlined how the commitments given in [DL\(2020\)30](#) apply to GPs and practice staff who have contracted COVID-19. It noted that as GP practice income had 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 were in a position to provide full pay to partners and staff who are absent due to contracting COVID-19.
8. Although the Advance Funding arrangements are now closed, Health Boards will continue to cover the costs of backfilling absent staff and record their costs as arising from COVID-19. In addition, for GP performers the enhanced sickness arrangements will continue via the [General Medical Services Statement of Financial Entitlements](#)<sup>1</sup> (SFE).

### **Suspension of online booking systems**

9. PCA(M)(2020)04 noted that some practice online appointment booking systems could not sufficiently triage patients who may be experiencing COVID-19 with the unfortunate result that some of these patients could present physically in the practice premises. The Scottish Government therefore advised that these systems should be suspended until further notice.
10. GP practices are obliged to offer online appointment booking under the GMS contract if they have capacity to do so. The closure of the COVID-19 Community Pathway means we can anticipate a continuing need to screen patients who may be experiencing COVID-19 and our advice to suspend these systems stands.

Yours sincerely



Naureen Ahmad, GP Policy and Contract.

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<sup>1</sup> There were no changes made to the SFE in 2021/22 so the SFE for 2020/21 is the current version.