



COVID 19 PRIMARY CARE UPDATE – 10 APRIL 2020 [AMENDED 17 APRIL]

Dear Colleagues

Please note the updates below for the latest information about Covid-19 response activities in Scottish Primary Care. This information should be considered alongside the latest [National Supporting Guidance for Scottish General Practice](#) published on 17 March 2020 and the [joint Scottish Government, BMA, and RCGP letter](#) published on 13 March 2020. We are aiming to publish updates to this work, and new developments, on a regular basis going forward. [The previous update from 24 March](#) is available on [SGHSC on SHOW](#).

GUIDANCE FOR SHIELDING VULNERABLE PATIENTS - On 26 March the Scottish Government [published a letter setting out arrangements](#) for identifying and writing to high-risk patients with important advice on self-isolation. The letter asks GPs to support this work by identifying patients who, in their clinical view, should be following this guidance but have not been picked up by the central identification process (indicated by a code that will be added to GP patient record) and forwarding their details to the health board co-ordinating team. A further update on shielding procedures was issued on 2 April, with another update to be issued soon. We worked with the BMA and RCGP to develop further guidance around Anticipatory Care Planning discussions and this was issued on 10 April. The Scottish Government also published a [Covid-19 Ethical Advice and Support Framework](#), as well as [Clinical Advice](#), on 3 April. They are intended to support NHS staff with decision making during this pandemic.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT - [Updated PPE guidance was published on 7 April](#) and [is available at the Health Protection Scotland website](#) alongside other resources such as PPE information posters. NHS National Services is now operating a dedicated service to respond to urgent PPE requests for primary and social care providers. The service will speed up the distribution of masks, aprons, gloves and other crucial items of PPE direct to where it is needed. GP practices should continue to acquire PPE through their Health Board procurement as normal but where PPE issues need to be escalated GPs can contact NSS directly by emailing NSS.covid-19resilience@nhs.net. The Scottish Government also has a new dedicated email address for staff and the public to raise specific supply issues - covid-19-health-PPE@gov.scot. Health Protection Scotland has also set up an inbox for clinical guidance enquiries - nss.hpscovid19@nhs.net.

FUNDING AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS - The Scottish Government and BMA have agreed that GP practices will remain open on Good Friday and Easter Monday this year, unless it is unsafe or otherwise impossible for a Practice to do so. To support GP practices to remain open on those dates, and to help alleviate extra financial pressures arising from responding to the Coronavirus, additional funding of £15 million has been provided to GP practices. The funding is being distributed so that every practice receives a minimum of £4000. These payments will be made by PSD and practices should expect the funds to reach them during April 2020. Covid-related expenditure covers equipment, non-clinical staff costs, salaried/sessional clinical staff costs, GP partner costs and locum cover for sickness leave. GPs are asked to record additional expenditures so that we can reimburse spending over and above the additional funding retrospectively.

DISPENSING PRACTICES - To support dispensing practices with the costs of increased workload, they will receive an estimated payment in April (February dispensing) based on three times the number of prescriptions submitted for pricing and the average payments per prescription for December 2019.

INDEMNITY - On 7 April, Jeane Freeman, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, instructed Territorial Health Boards to ensure that their membership of the Clinical Negligence and Other Risk Indemnity Scheme (CNORIS) extends to any person engaged by Health Boards in Coronavirus response work. This includes all Health Board employees, GPs and Practice staff working in COVID hubs and assessment centres, as well as to General Dental Practitioners and Dental Practice staff and Optometrists in COVID

response roles. This does not apply where indemnity arrangements are already in place for individuals to be indemnified, and **independent contractors should maintain and update their existing indemnity arrangements as normal.**

VACCINATIONS & IMMUNISATIONS - Health Boards are directed to ensure the provision of the vaccinations and immunisations (as Directed Enhanced Services) ordinarily provided by GP practices. Each Health Board should establish whether and to what extent these programmes can continue to be provided by GP practices during the current Coronavirus outbreak. Where there is a risk that vaccinations or immunisations cannot be provided on time Health Boards should make other arrangements for the provision of those. The Scottish Government is committed to income stability for GP practices while vaccination services are transferred. Practices who have previously contracted to deliver such services should therefore be paid as if they have completed the activity themselves.

REIMBURSEMENTS FOR SICK LEAVE - The two-week absence requirement for reimbursements has been removed and the maximum weekly cap for reimbursements covering sickness leave has been doubled. From 3rd March 2020 practices will be able to claim locum payments from the first day of sickness up to £3,468.36 per week. These payments can continue to be used for internal or external locum cover. An interim Statement of Financial Entitlements will be issued shortly to reflect these arrangements.

DEATH CERTIFICATION - The Scottish Government [published guidance on 24 March](#) that that relaxes what clinicians are required to do to verify death for patients where the cause of death is expected to be due to the COVID-19 disease. This is intended to free up front line clinicians to focus on patient care and prevent delays in the prompt management of deaths in community settings. Clinicians may still discuss patient deaths with Coroners if they wish to do so. This guidance should be considered alongside wider guidance available online: [Confirmation of Death by Registered HealthCare Professionals Framework \(2017\)](#), [Management of Deaths in the Community \(in and out of hours\) \(2016\)](#), and [Rapid provision of MCCD in exceptional circumstances \(2015\)](#).

CARDIAC ARREST GUIDANCE - On 24 March Public Health Scotland (HPS) published a link to updated Department of Health [guidance to support emergency responders attending Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest \(OHCA\) calls](#). This advice is relevant for GPs and other clinicians who might be asked to attend an emergency outside of their practice. Further supplementary information is available from Resuscitation Council UK which offers guidance that covers both [out-of-hospital](#) and [acute hospital settings](#). GPs seeking further advice should always refer to latest HPS guidance. HPS can be contacted directly for clinical advice by email at nss.hpscoronavirus@nhs.net.

POLICE SCOTLAND FIREARM LICENSING TEMPORARY MEASURES - Police Scotland have adopted interim processes with regard to the grant and renewal of firearms applications in light of the COVID19 outbreak with immediate effect. This means new grant applications for shotguns and firearms have been suspended except where it is essential for employment purposes. GPs will only be contacted in respect of new grant applications in the above circumstances. GPs will only be contacted where a significant concern arises in respect of renewals/existing certificate holders. These will also require to be followed up later if the holder's GP has not previously been consulted. GPs should continue to contact Firearms Licensing where they identify any concerns in respect of their patients. Firearms Licensing continues to be a critical function for Police Scotland at this time. We will notify when this temporary arrangement ceases and normal procedures resume.

RECRUITMENT WEBSITE LAUNCHED - NHS Education for Scotland (NES) launched an online recruitment website on 28 March, to recruit former health and social care colleagues back into services and match them to areas of greatest need. Returning staff will be paid and be part of supervised teams. People can offer support even if they are in a group considered to be at increased risk as there are lots of roles that don't require face-to-face working. The website can be accessed [here](#). Members of the public enquiring about voluntary work can be directed to the volunteering portal at [Ready Scotland](#). Further guidance on who is eligible and how to participate is available [here](#).

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE GUIDANCE - Health and social care workforce [guidance was published on 9 April](#) that provides greater detail for wider nursing and community health teams and their roles in responding to the pandemic. This guidance is for all NHS staff working in the community and health and social care partnerships during covid-19. It may also support planning and prioritisation of the workforce as part of the community and primary care resilience response.

NHS 24 TOOLKIT FOR NON-COVID19 CONDITIONS - NHS 24 have assembled a toolkit for use with messages for patients with concerns other than COVID19. It includes information on common symptoms, minor ailments, dental health and concerns due to screening programmes being temporarily paused. There are links to clinically approved advice developed by NHS 24 teams responding to patient questions during out of hours periods. It includes a number of posts that can be used on practice websites or Facebook feeds to direct people to clinically safe, quality assured resources at www.nhsinform.scot. The toolkit and other resources can be accessed at [NHS 24's Primary Care Support Resources website](#).

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING - During this very challenging time for us ALL, the NHS Occupational Health services in each Board area are continuing to provide a range of services to GPs and their staff. However as you will understand these are limited to very key areas and mostly relate to the provision of advice, information and support around COVID-19. Please refer to your local NHS Board's intranet site to access information and support as required or contact your local Occupational Health Service contact number. Another useful resource is the [NES Module for Psychosocial Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Staff](#), developed specifically to help staff look after themselves, the people around them and their teams during this pandemic.

On behalf of the Scottish Government thank you for your dedication, hard work and service to Scotland's people.