

27 August 2020

Dear Practices

2020 influenza vaccination programme

I am writing to you as we head into the time of year where practices are normally gearing up to deliver the influenza vaccination programme. There has been understandable anxiety in general practice about how, in the midst of the social distancing and PPE requirements Covid has placed upon us, this year's vital vaccination programme is to be delivered.

Delivery in the traditional manner risks either the workload ask of general practice being significantly higher than normal, impacting on patient access to GP care, or the vaccination rates achieved by practices dropping significantly, putting more people at risk of flu when we can ill afford it and undermining practice finances. I have been clear since the pandemic first began that neither outcome was acceptable and a whole-system response was required.

While I regret that we could not have reached this position in a more timely manner, we have now concluded an agreement with the Scottish Government that sets out expectations nationally that GP practices will contribute broadly the same amount of time normally spent on vaccinations in previous years and in exchange practice incomes from flu vaccinations will be protected, regardless of actual numbers of vaccinations delivered in that time. Vaccination activity above that previous time commitment and an allowance for opportunistic vaccinations will then attract an additional item of service payment.

At the onset of the pandemic, we agreed the principle with Scottish Government that we would develop mechanisms to ensure that no practice loses out financially as a result of Covid should it be required. These arrangements are the first time that we have been required to put this into practice and negotiate a protection mechanism for practices.

The time that it has taken to conclude this agreement means that in some parts of the country, local arrangements have progressed that may differ from what we have agreed nationally. To be clear, the national agreement allows for such local flexibility to continue where there is agreement with the LMC and does not seek to cut across such arrangements.

As you will be aware, the direction of travel under the new contract is for responsibility for all vaccinations to transfer out of practices to health boards. Where this has already happened,

National director (Scotland): Jill Vickerman

Chief executive officer: Tom Grinyer

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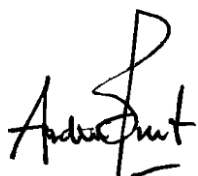
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such arrangements remain in place and practices will continue to be paid on the basis we agreed as part of the new contract.

This winter is set to put demands on general practice and the health system as never before and it is in all of our interests to ensure that we are as prepared as possible through strong uptake of this year's influenza vaccine. Unless local arrangements have been made that do not require practice participation, I would encourage your practice to take part in this year's critical influenza vaccination programme and for general practice to play our part in readying ourselves for what is likely to be coming this winter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Buist', with a large, stylized initial 'A' at the top.

Dr Andrew Buist
Chair, BMA Scottish GP Committee