BMA

England

PCN DES Guidance

Background

The PCN DES commences on 1 April 2020. NHS England has released the specification and guidance. The climate and the pressures have changed significantly since the original specifications were agreed and in view of that, GPC England has produced this guidance to support practices to work together. The focus of the PCN DES is now to mainly support practices to increase their workforce and deal with the national emergency of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The guidance is intended to be brief and the purpose is to support practices to work together locally by navigating the DES in a straight-forward manner.

Sign up

Whilst there is no 'sign up' as such to the DES (it is an opt out), we encourage all practices to take part in the DES to provide a structure in this national effort to deal with COVID-19.

Service specifications

Whilst NHSE/I have indicated that some of the service specifications have been postponed for a period of time, realistically general practice will not be in a place to work on these fully this year. We therefore suggest that practices, working together where possible, focus on providing good care for their patients whilst acknowledging that dealing with COVID-19 is going to take up most of our workforce and resources in the coming months. This should apply to all the three specifications that were due to be introduced this year (Structured Medication Review and Medicines Optimisation, Enhanced Health in Care Homes, and Early Cancer Diagnosis).

Extended Hours Access

Capacity to provide this is going to fluctuate immensely over the coming months. Whilst it is important to provide access to patients that require it promptly, you will find yourselves in a position where working long days is neither realistic nor appropriate. Appointments can be delivered remotely and by other healthcare professionals. The focus needs to remain on staff and patient welfare and must not be compromised by efforts to deliver the specified hours in the DES. The payment of £1.45 per patient will be made to the PCN to be passed on to practices as at present.

Investment and Impact Fund (IIF) – PCN Support Payment (SP)

The IIF is suspended for the first 6 months and the equivalent funds of 27p per weighted patient for this period will be paid to the PCNs directly. This is now referred to as the PCN Support Payment. As with the service specifications, we anticipate that this will need to be suspended for the rest of the year with transfer of funds directly to the PCNs for the remainder of the year.

Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS)

The need for practices to rapidly recruit is more than ever at the moment. If PCNs/practices have made arrangements to recruit staff and/or considering recruiting staff in the coming months, you should continue with this. The ARRS funding is protected for this. While ARRS funding is important, it is not the only support to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak and this is something we are urgently working with NHSE/I on. Additional support should also come through the return to practice schemes for recently retired GPs and additional funding to practices to support flexible recruitment of essential workforce.

Whilst the requirement to postpone the submission of the workforce plans has been postponed till end of August, it is likely that this will become an academic exercise as the situation then is going to be very different to now.

PCN Clinical Directors (CDs)

It is likely that the work burden on CDs will increase significantly in the coming months. The main focus of this should be to support constituent practices to deal with COVID-19. Some of the non-clinical functions should be passed on to other staff (for example, practice managers) so that the CD role focuses mainly on clinical functions. This will require prioritising of work and we strongly encourage you to focus on COVID-19 and postpone the rest.

Network Participation Payment

The payment of £1.761 per weighted patient will be made to the practices.

Core PCN Funding

The core payment of £1.50 per patient will be made to the PCN.