

new five year GP contract to take effect from April 2019

A new five year GP contract for England will be introduced from April 2019. The GP contract will increase general practice funding by almost £1 billion per year by 2023/24, as well as providing state backed indemnity insurance and IT funding.

During the first year of the new GP contract the global sum payment per patient will increase by 1% with practices receiving £89.88 per patient during 2019/20, an increase of 92p from the £88.96 received per patient in 2018/19. However, the global sum payment will be increased further over the remaining four year contract period (2020/21 to 2023/24).

The relatively small increase to the global sum payment from 2018/19 to 2019/20 is to allow for the costs of setting up a state backed insurance scheme in April 2019. The scheme will cover clinical negligence claims for all GPs, and all other staff working to deliver primary medical services.

A primary care network (PCN) contract will also be introduced and will take effect from July 2019. The contract will invest a further £1.8 billion in PCNs, equating to around £1.5 million per 50,000 patient network. A PCN brings together a range of health and social care professionals, such as GPs and pharmacists to work together to provide personalised and preventative care in their local community.

In addition to the global sum payment, each practice that joins a



PCN by July 2019 will receive a network participation payment of £1.76 per patient. Although the new GP contract does not make joining a PCN mandatory, both the British Medical Association (BMA) and NHS England expect every practice to do so. PCNs are intended to provide patients with better access to healthcare. Each PCN covers between 30,000 and 50,000 patients. According to NHS England, PCNs are small enough to provide personal care but large enough to have an impact and to benefit from economies of scale.

According to the BMA, the global sum and PCN payments will enable practices to increase staff pay by at least 2% during 2019/20. Practices that belong to a PCN will also

benefit from access to practice support staff, including social prescribers, clinical pharmacists, physiotherapists and physician associates. NHS England has promised to fund 22,000 support staff by 2023/24.

Medical accountants expect practices to be 'better off' under the new contract. However, they have called for reassurances that joining PCNs will not result in 'hidden tax bills' for member practices.

Read more about the new GP contract at:
<https://bit.ly/2Uv7P1j>

UK dentistry market grows

The market for dentistry in the UK grew by 0.2% in 2017/18 to reach £7.1 billion, despite a decrease of 1.2% in NHS spending on dentistry. This is according to the 'Dentistry UK Market Report', published by LaingBuisson in January 2019.

The main driver of market growth was continuing high demand among private dental patients for specialist treatments such as cosmetic dentistry, facial aesthetics and hygiene services. The private dentistry sector also benefitted from an increase in the number of NHS patients who paid for private treatment upgrades to their NHS dental care.

The report has revealed that corporate dentistry (ie dental practices that operate in multiple locations) now accounts for a quarter of all UK dentistry and will increase its market share over the next three years. Although NHS spending will decline over this period, continued growth in the dentistry market as a whole is predicted.

However, the report has warned that growth may be undermined by Brexit-related economic uncertainty and by a shortage of dentists. The number of new dentists in the UK fell by a fifth from 2017 to 2019, and there are significant recruitment

problems that may worsen due to the UK leaving the EU.

Recruitment problems are at their worst in areas of the UK with high demand for NHS dentistry, where the shortage of dentists has limited the amount of work that has been carried out under NHS contracts. LaingBuisson has also acknowledged that a new NHS dentist contract, which could improve patient care, is still some distance away and any impact it may have on the industry is still unknown.

Read more about the report at: <https://bit.ly/2CRiYfs>

survey reveals financial insecurity of GP practices

Over half (55%) of GP partners believe that their practice is less financially secure than it had been a year ago according to a survey carried out by GPOnline in January 2019. Just 6% of GP partners felt their practice was more financially secure, and 75% said that they had felt no positive impact from GP Forward View funding or from additional investment made available via their GP contracts.

Concerns raised by survey respondents included increased staff costs, recruitment problems, and a heavy workload that is made worse by the need to spend time chasing multiple funding streams.

These pressures have contributed to the decision of many GPs to take on locum work rather than becoming practice partners, or to change career. More than 1,800 GPs left the profession in the two years to September 2018.

One GP who took part in the survey commented: *"We struggle to pay our staff for the work that they do. We compete for funding in winter with commercial*

pharmacies for flu vaccine payments and lose out. We struggle to maintain the existing service and cannot provide more without significant extra funding to pay for it."

Commenting on the survey, Dr Richard Vautrey, chair of the General Practitioners' Committee, said that its findings demonstrate that the current level of funding does not address GPs' workload or their recruitment needs, adding: *"Government has to take the crisis we have seriously and match their verbal support for general practice with real and*

significant investment that is able to make a tangible difference."

Shortly after the GPOnline survey, the Department of Health & Social Care published its 'NHS Long-term Plan', which included a pledge to increase funding for primary and community care by £4.5 billion by 2023/24.

Read more about the survey at: <https://bit.ly/2RDATAFX>



in brief...

A&E triage scheme intensifies GP shortages

Research published by Pulse has indicated that a quarter of GP practices are struggling to employ GP locums following the introduction of a mandatory new GP service in A&E departments. Since winter 2017, all acute trusts and A&E departments must have GPs permanently on site to triage and treat patients who do not require hospital care. The research has revealed that 24% of GPs are finding it more difficult to employ locums due to the increased competition. In addition, A&E departments are often able to pay higher wages than GPs in order to attract locums. In response, GPs have warned that the new triage scheme is leading to staff shortages and rising workloads in practices. <https://bit.ly/2SBfidH>

Findings of review into GP partnerships published

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has published the findings of its independent review into the partnership model of general practice. The review was set up to identify the challenges facing GP partnerships and to make recommendations to improve and strengthen the partnership model for GPs and patients. The review has revealed that the high level of risk involved in joining a GP partnership, rising workloads and skills shortages are the main challenges facing GP practices. In response, the DHSC has called for new legal structures to reduce the personal risk and unlimited liability GPs face when working in partnerships and action to strengthen the relationship between GP practices and other healthcare professionals to improve the delivery and quality of care. <https://bit.ly/2TO4Hxa>

Investigation into unfair dental care fines

The National Audit Office has launched an investigation into the process for issuing fines to patients who claim for free NHS dental care despite being ineligible. Currently, penalty charge notices (PCNs) of up to £100 are issued to patients who wrongly claim for free NHS dental treatments. Overall, the number of PCNs issued to patients has increased by over 1000% over the last five years to reach 427,238. However, most of the fines are issued to vulnerable patients such as the elderly and those with learning disabilities. The British Dental Association has welcomed the investigation and said that the current process for issuing fines unfairly targets vulnerable people, and is leading to fines for people who are eligible for free NHS dental care but have incorrectly filled in the treatment claim form. <https://bit.ly/2EDxC27>

Rising costs a key challenge for general practice

The latest 'NHS Payments to General Practice' report published by NHS Digital has revealed that GP practices in England were paid an average of £152.04 per patient in 2017/18, which is a year-on-year increase of just 0.4%. Overall, the 7,543 general practices in England received a total of £9 billion to deliver care in 2017/18, up almost 2% compared with 2016/17. The report has also indicated that the number of GP practices in England has fallen by 6% since 2014 due to closures and mergers, which is reducing patient choice and leading to higher workloads for practices. Staff shortages, rising wages and higher costs are also placing more pressure on practices. <https://bit.ly/2TpKAZD>

Practices taking on private patients to boost income

Research from GPonline has revealed that a growing number of GP practices are considering taking on private patients in order to increase income. Since NHS England was set up in 2013, around 1,100 GP practices have been forced to close or merge due to budget cuts. As a result, more practices are being forced to explore new ways to boost practice income. However, the research has also indicated that GPs are taking on private patients to offer a better quality of care, as private appointments can last longer and provide greater continuity of care compared with NHS appointments. <https://bit.ly/2TaRG55>

GDPR leading to higher costs for GPs

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has confirmed that GPs can no longer charge a nominal fee for patient information requests following the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). According to the DCMS, allowing GPs to charge a fee for subject access requests would weaken the rights of patients. However, a survey of 1,500 GPs by the British Medical Association has revealed that subject access requests have increased by 36% since GDPR came into force, which is leading to higher costs and workloads for GPs. In addition, around 77% of subject access requests are submitted by organisations such as solicitors and insurers acting on behalf of patients, while just 22% of requests are made directly by patients. <https://bit.ly/2StXvpS>



fewer doctors directly entering speciality

The proportion of foundation year doctors intending to become GPs has dropped in the last year, according to the Career Destinations report published by the UK Foundation Programme Office (UKFPO).

The annual report surveyed 6,407 F2 trainees (junior doctors in their second year of foundation training) about their career aspirations and specialties.

The report reveals that the proportion of doctors choosing a specialty (including GP training) decreased from 71% in 2011, to just

38% 2018. The survey also reveals that the proportion of F2 doctors progressing into specialty training had fallen every year since 2011. However the report acknowledges that although a record number of GP trainees were recruited in 2018 it was most likely due to many trainees not coming directly from foundation training due to GP recruitment becoming more complex.

The report identified a number of reasons behind the drop in GP trainees including stress, continuous examinations and an increase in doctors taking breaks after foundation training.

The BMA is concerned about the drop in GP numbers and predicts that it will only worsen current workforce problems. Health Education England deputy medical director for education reform, Professor Sheona MacLeod, said: *'It highlights a change in attitude*

which is evident prior to entry into the UK Foundation Programme and this needs further exploration.'

A new five-year GP training scheme that will recruit trainees straight from medical degrees has also been proposed and could be introduced by 2021.

Read more about the report at: <https://bit.ly/2XwS38o>



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dental practice valuations continue to fall

Goodwill valuations of NHS dental practices fell to 177% of gross fees in Q3 2018, while valuations of private practices fell to 104% of gross fees in the same period according to the NASDAL Goodwill Survey.

This means that dental practice valuations overall were just 125% of gross fees, compared with 153% in Q3 2017. The average transaction price in a dental practices sale in Q3 2018 was 122% of gross fees, compared with 134% a year earlier. According to the 'Business Outlook 2019: Navigate, Innovate, Accelerate' report, published by sales agent Christie & Co, demand for dental practices is likely to remain strong in 2019 following growth in the dental sector in 2018.

The report has revealed that the price of dental practices increased

moderately in 2018 and predicts that prices will continue to be strong in 2019 due to a good supply of practices coming on to the market.

There is particularly strong demand for large practices and small groups of practices. For example, Apposite Capital, a new entrant to the market, has recently invested in Riverdale Healthcare. It also acquired the Alpha Vitality Group, which operates in north east England.

Regional variation in demand is significant because potential purchasers of NHS practices in some parts of the UK are concerned that they will not be able to recruit enough associates to meet NHS targets.

Read more about the reports at: <https://bit.ly/2BYCvRM>