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Focus on Healthcare

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GPs to receive additional COVID-19 financial support for next six months

Plus

- RCPG warns integrated care systems could cause funding issues
- Pharmacies call on Health Secretary to provide additional financial support
- Furlough scheme extended until end of September



Welcome to our latest Focus on Healthcare

Welcome to the latest edition of our Healthcare Bulletin, designed to keep you up to date with the very latest developments in the healthcare sector.

For more information on any of the issues covered in this newsletter, please contact David Belbin or Neil Windley for matters relating to doctors, dentists and opticians, or care homes.

RCPG warns integrated care systems could cause funding issues

The Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has warned that new Government plans to reform the NHS could lead to GP practices being 'starved' of funding.

Professor Martin Marshall claimed that in certain parts of England new system of integrated care "simply won't work".

His comments followed the Government's publication of its White Paper which sets out its vision of integrated care.

In an interview with *GPonline*, Professor Marshall said: "If CCGs are disestablished in the way that NHS England would like – and I understand why they might want that – the risk is that there won't be any force behind the GP voice, there won't be any incentives in the system to listen to GPs, and that's a concern.

"I am confident that in some parts of the country, the GP voice is sufficiently well established, relationships with

hospital colleagues are sufficiently good for that to happen.

"But there are many other parts of the country where there hasn't been sufficient time to develop that collective GP voice, where there possibly isn't one, and where hospitals are very powerful – particularly in areas like cities where there are big teaching hospitals – where integrated care initiatives simply won't work, because they're driven by the hospitals rather than by general practice.

"If you've got an integrated care system that doesn't work well, if the power is with the hospitals, the hospitals will demand more money and general practice will be starved and that would be a disaster," warned Professor Marshall.

The Government White Paper – Integration and Innovation: Working Together to Improve Health and Social Care for All – was published on 11 February and much of its content refers to the proposed changes as a result of the effects of COVID-19 on the health and care system.



GPs to receive additional COVID-19 financial support for next six months

NHS England has confirmed that an additional £120million is to be made available to general practices to help provide 'normal patient services' during the pandemic.

The funding, which NHS England is making available exclusively for GP practices is a one off payment and must be used to "support the expansion of capacity" over the next six months.

The funding is available in increments, with £30million being set aside for both April and May, a further £20million for June and July, with a remaining £10million per month for August and September. NHS England has warned that the funding must not be used for "commitments running beyond" September.

In a letter to GPs, NHS England Director of Primary Care, Ed Waller and Primary Care Medical Director, Dr Nikki Kanani, explained the funding would need to be used to 'make further progress' into reducing the backlog of care caused by the pandemic, providing backfill for staff absences and increasing GP numbers and capacity.

BMA GP committee chair Dr Richard Vautrey, said: "In the face of a huge backlog of care, and the longer-term impact of the pandemic now being felt, we hope that this extra funding will go some way to giving practices the capacity and flexibility they need to continue vaccinating people alongside this vital care, if they wish to do so.

"Other practices not taking part in the campaign will also be able to access some funding to help their response to the challenges they face as we move into the latest phase of the pandemic.

"While GPs and their teams, as well as colleagues in other settings, are doing an excellent job vaccinating record numbers of people, the programme still has a long way to go to reach everyone, and therefore we will continue to ask that practices and PCNs are fully supported to allow them to take such a leading role in the campaign."

For business support specific to the healthcare sector, please get in touch with our expert team.

Pharmacies call on Health Secretary to provide additional financial support

The head of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) has called on the Health Secretary to commit to a share of the additional £6.6billion COVID-19 funding for the health sector, to be made available to support community pharmacies.

In March, Matt Hancock announced the additional multi-million pound health care funding for the first half of 2021 but failed to mention community pharmacies in his statement to parliament.

Simon Dukes, the PSNC's CEO, said: "Pharmacies have much to offer through this next phase of the pandemic too and we want to see the NHS supporting them financially as it starts to plan for the future."

In February, the PSNC revealed that HM Treasury had refused to renegotiate on its original funding offer to the sector.

In a bid to support the sector, Pharmacy Minister Jo Churchill told Parliament that the Department for Health "expects" to reimburse pharmacies for COVID-19 costs by reducing the £370 million the sector must pay back. Between March and June 2020, community pharmacies received the advance funding in recognition of the cashflow issues they were facing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keep up to date with the latest news affecting pharmacies, dentists and healthcare professionals – sign up to our blogs and follow us on Twitter.



Furlough scheme extended until end of September

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), more commonly referred to as furlough, will now be extended until the end of September this year following confirmation in the recent Chancellor's Budget.

First introduced a year ago, the scheme has provided an essential lifeline to many businesses operating in the healthcare sector whose businesses have been impacted by the pandemic.

The level of grant available to employers under the CJRS will be maintained until 30 June 2021, under the latest extension, meaning employers will only be responsible for paying pension and National Insurance contributions.



To prevent an abrupt end to the support available, from 1 July 2021, the level of the grant will be reduced so that employers start making additional contributions to the scheme.

To be eligible for the CJRS, employers must continue to pay furloughed employees 80% of their wages, up to a cap of £2,500 per month for the time they spend on furlough.

But in July the amount of support given by the Government will be limited to 70% (capped at £2,187.50), with the remaining 10 per cent provided by the employer.

Then from 1 August until the end of the scheme on 30 September 2021, employers must contribute 20%, with the Government covering the remaining 60% of a person's regular wage (capped at £1,875).

In addition to the 10% and 20% contribution made in July, August and September, employers must continue to pay employers National Insurance and pension contributions on the full amount being paid to employees.

For CJRS claims from 1 May 2021, employees on an RTI submission before 2 March 2021 will be eligible for furlough.

Employers can claim before, during or after they process their payroll, as long as a claim is submitted by the relevant claim deadline.

Claims must be submitted by 11.59pm, 14 calendar days after the month being claimed for unless this day falls on the weekend or a bank holiday, then claims should be submitted on the next working day.

Employers must prepare for these upcoming changes and consider the impact that the additional employment costs may have on their business.

In some cases, businesses may need to consider redundancies, which may require a lengthy consultation process, so preparations should be taken now.

If you would like assistance with managing these changes or have any queries about the CJRS, please contact us.

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