

Dear GP colleagues

We wanted to write to you as we all respond to COVID-19. We care about you and your families and friends. We are so proud of how GPs have responded to the call to action in this crisis. It has been wonderful to see how colleagues are working together in new ways. So many of you are going the extra mile for patients and for your colleagues. We also appreciate that things may feel very difficult at times. We want to support you as you work differently and flexibly. We also want to ensure that you are aware that there are a growing number of resources and opportunities to support you, which include the following.

Survive and Thrive: Join a positive energising virtual 'Doctors Mess'

A London-based twice-weekly confidential meeting place to talk, share, offload and give space to plan and prioritise in small virtual break out rooms. Starting on Tuesday 28th April 2020. Every Tuesday at 3:30 – 4:30 pm and Thursday 6:30 – 7:30 pm. Supported by members of the appraisal team. For more information email direct to contactdoctorsmess@gmail.com

RCGP Wellbeing Resources

[GP Wellbeing - RCGP](#)

NHS staff support

A free, confidential staff support line operated by the Samaritans 7am-11pm, seven days a week

03001317000

Free access to apps such as headspace and sleepio

<https://people.nhs.uk/help/>

Practitioner Health

<https://www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk/covid-19-workforce-wellbeing>

As you will be aware appraisal and revalidation have been suspended until further notice. This is to allow doctors, appraisers and the associated administrative teams to focus on clinical work and be deployed in the best way to support the COVID-19 emergency. For further information please see the attached FAQs.

We hope that it is helpful to highlight the following information from the letter co-signed by The Chief Medical Officer, The National Medical Director and the Medical Director of Education and Standards. Although much has moved on at pace since early March, the messages remain relevant.

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/supporting-doctors-covid-19-letter-11-march-2020.pdf>

“This pressure will inevitably be exacerbated by staff shortages due to sickness or caring responsibilities. It will be a challenge for our profession. We are confident doctors will respond rapidly and professionally and want to assure colleagues that we recognise this will require temporary changes to practice, and that regulators and others will take this into account. A significant epidemic will require healthcare professionals to be flexible in what they do. It may entail working in unfamiliar circumstances or surroundings or working in clinical areas outside of their usual practice for the benefit of patients and the population as a whole. This can be stressful, and you may have concerns about both the professional practicalities and implications of working in such circumstances. We need to stick to the basic principles of being a good doctor. All doctors are expected to follow GMC guidance and use their judgement in applying the principles to the situations they face, but these rightly take account of the realities of a very abnormal emergency situation. We want doctors, in partnership with patients, always to use their professional judgement to assess risk and to make sure people receive safe care, informed by the values and principles set out in their professional standards. A rational approach to varying practice in an emergency is part of that professional response. It is the responsibility of GP practices, hospitals, trusts and health boards to ensure that clinicians working in their organisations are supported to do this. They must bear in mind that clinicians may need to depart, possibly significantly, from established procedures in order to care for patients in the highly challenging but time-bound circumstances of the peak of an epidemic. We expect employers, educational supervisors, professional bodies, and national NHS and HSC organisations to be flexible in terms of their approach and the expectations of routine requirements. Healthcare professional regulators, including the GMC, have already committed to take into account factors relevant to the environment in which the professional is working, including relevant information about resources, guidelines or protocols in place at the time. Due consideration should and will be given to healthcare professionals and other staff who are using their skills under difficult circumstances due to lack of personnel and overwhelming demand in a major epidemic. This may include working outside their usual scope of practice. The healthcare regulators have already released a joint statement to explain this.”

<https://www.gmc-uk.org/news/news-archive/how-we-will-continue-to-regulate-in-light-of-novel-coronavirus>

We are in full agreement with this letter.

Thank you all for everything you are doing.

Best wishes

Dr Helene Brown and Dr Jane Fryer Responsible Officers for London GPs.

NHS England and NHS Improvement

