

Dear colleagues

BMA secures significant reduction in NHSPS service charge claims for practices

The BMA has successfully assisted five GP practices in significantly reducing years of unsubstantiated service charge claims demanded by NHS Property Services (NHSPS) – with one practice seeing NHSPS' claim against them reduced by more than £400,000, a reduction of more than 80%.

The landmark cases, brought in 2020, were started after practices began to struggle to afford soaring service charges set by NHSPS, despite there being no prior agreement or explanation for the price hike.

BMA lawyers challenged NHSPS on two issues: the legal basis on which the charges were being imposed, and the magnitude of the fees.

During the first phase of the case, the BMA and the practices sought a legal declaration that NHSPS could not rely on its Consolidated Charging Policy as a basis for issuing the new charges, and that the imposition of the higher charges was therefore, unlawful.

Despite the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the extraordinary pressure this placed GPs under, NHSPS launched a countersuit against each of the practices demanding recovery of the historical service charges, transforming the dispute into a major commercial lawsuit.

In June 2020, NHSPS admitted that its charging policy had not been incorporated into or retrospectively varied the practices' legal terms of occupation and existing service charge obligations. The BMA then assisted the five practices in settling with NHSPS the fees and service charges sums outside of court, for the period between 2013/14 and 2019/20, securing reductions on the amounts claimed by NHSPS for the five practices ranging from £25,000 to more than £400,000, a total reduction of more than £750,000.

The BMA has created [guidance](#) for practices in a similar position, to help advise them on what to do if they are also facing disproportionate service charges.

Read the full statement and comment by Gaurav Gupta, GPC premises lead at the BMA, [here](#)

Accelerated Access to Records

Following the imposition of the GP contract, practices will be expected to provide automatic prospective record access to all patients from 31st October 2023. While GPC England remains committed to finding a way forward whilst acknowledging the reality on the ground for GPs, we have prepared [guidance](#) outlining steps practices should take ahead of the planned switch on. If you have any questions not addressed in the guidance, please get in touch with info.gpc@bma.org.uk

Parliamentary activity

We have written to the Primary Care Minister, Neil O'Brien to highlight the motions passed at [LMC UK conference](#) regarding increased costs of running practices, and pay restoration for practice funding, and the Minister has agreed to meet to discuss these issues. We have also written, with the

chair of Northern Ireland GPC, to the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, asking for him to work with DHSC to deliver a package of support to meet increased practice costs, particularly those linked to inflation.

In addition, GPCE and the sessional GPs committee have written to Sir Keir Starmer to outline our key concerns and priorities for the future of general practice following their recent [NHS plan](#), and offered a roundtable with him and his team to discuss Labour party policy in this area. We have also met with a special advisor to the Shadow Health secretary to discuss the future of general practice.

Following our meeting we were encouraged to see Labour MP Karin Smyth, [raise our concerns](#) regarding spiralling costs to practices during health questions in the House of Commons.

Safe working and preparing for balloting on industrial action

Current working conditions are not safe, for patients or GPs, and practices are strongly encouraged to continue to use our [safe working guidance](#), and to limit contacts to 25 per day in order to prioritise safe patient care, within the present bounds of the GMS contract.

We need to come together to save general practice, defend our profession, and make general practice safe for patients. In April, GPC England voted to prepare to ballot GPs on industrial action if the Government does not agree to improve the contract drastically in forthcoming negotiations.

Please join us as we prepare for potential industrial action. By law, only BMA members can participate in a ballot on industrial action, and the more BMA members working collectively sends a powerful message to government that the present situation must urgently change. If you are a member, make sure the details we hold for you are up to date to ensure your vote counts. Update your member details on www.bma.org.uk/my-bma or [join us as a member](#) today.

The BMA will be communicating directly with GPs and LMCs over the coming weeks and months.

Junior doctors' and GP trainees strike action

The [BMA has announced](#) further industrial action to be undertaken by [junior doctors \(including GP Trainees\)](#) in England, after Government failed to make credible pay offer. A 72-hour walkout will take place between 0700 on Wednesday 14 June and 0700 on Saturday 17 June.

GPC England supports all junior doctors, including GP trainees, in their pursuit for pay restoration to 2008 levels, and we would urge practices in standing with GP trainees in their fight for fair pay. Show your support for the future of healthcare in England.

We have published [comprehensive guidance for GP practices](#), trainers and LMCs which covers everything from managing the impact of strike action on practice work to GP trainee rotas and information on [how GP practices can support GP trainees financially](#).

We have produced a poster which we encourage you to display in your practice, a patient information leaflet, and an infographic that can be used on your website - [order here](#)

The BMA has also published [guidance on strike action for GP trainees](#).

See more on the strike action on GP trainees twitter <https://twitter.com/BMAGPtrainees>

COVID therapeutics

As you may be aware CMDUs (Covid Medicines Delivery Units) are ceasing from 27th June. NHS England has written to ICBs to ensure provision of Covid therapeutics is commissioned. We have produced guidance for GPs about this and a letter for LMCs to send to ICBs. Practices should have a clear pathway to refer/signpost patients to continue access to COVID therapeutics for vulnerable patients. This cohort of patients will have been contacted and may call practices about how to access their locally commissioned service (other services can also refer/signpost directly such as 111). Read our guidance, which will be available shortly [here](#)

BMA member briefing on the GP delivery plan

In the last update, we shared our [member briefing](#) on the NHS England and DHSC [Delivery plan for recovering access to primary care](#). ICBs are responsible for ensuring that providers are fulfilling the requirements in the plan and to monitor and report to NHSE the progress being made.

We have now published [template letters](#) to support practices and LMCs to engage with their local Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) regarding the implementation of the primary secondary care interface elements of the plan. Please feel free to adapt to local needs.

LMC UK Conference 2023

The [2023 UK LMC Conference](#) took place 18-19 May, chaired by Katie Bramall-Stainer and opened by Andrew Buist and Alan Stout, GPC UK co-chairs. The motions, debates and speeches throughout conference highlighted the UK wide crisis in general practice, and the need for further changes. The [resolutions and election results](#) have now been published, and a [recorded webcast of the event](#)

Sessional GP Week 2023

To support and celebrate your valued sessional GP colleagues, the BMA has created '[Sessional GP Week](#)' taking place on the 12-16 June. This will be a week-long celebration highlighting the value of sessional GPs and promoting sessional GP as a positive, diverse and enriching career choice. The focus for the week is 'respect, reward, retain'.

Resources will be shared throughout the week, and a different theme each day, so please encourage your colleagues to get involved. You will also find out more about what the sessional GP committee is doing and how they are supporting you. Read more on the [sessional GPs Committee page](#)

Show your support for your colleagues on [Twitter @BMA_GP using the #SessionalGPWeek2023](#)

Sessional GPs Conference – Save the date

We are pleased to announce that the Sessional GP Committee will be hosting a conference for members and non-members across the UK on Friday 22 September, at BMA House, 10-5pm. It will consist of plenary sessions, CPD type breakout groups and a platform to hear from grassroots members. A final programme will be circulated with the registration link in due course but for now save the date. See attached a poster for practices and register your interest: confunit@bma.org.uk

NHS.net email for locums

We have had confirmation that the licences for Microsoft Apps for Enterprise for those in the locum container of NHSmail will continue to be provisioned for the next financial year following work by NHS England. These licences are required to use desktop versions of Office 365 (e.g. Microsoft Word) which can link into clinical systems for the creation of referral forms. The Sessional GPs Committee repeatedly raised the necessity of such access when issues first came to light in January

2021 after parts of the country moved to Office 365 and continues to make the case for ongoing access on your behalf. For more tips on the use of the locum container, see the blog by Mark Coley, GPC England IT lead, [here](#)

Our Future Health research programme

[Our Future Health](#) is a new research programme designed to help people live healthier lives for longer, through the discovery and testing of more effective approaches to prevention, earlier detection and treatment of diseases. The aim is to collect and link multiple sources of health and health-relevant information, including genetic data, across a cohort of up to 5 million people that truly reflects the UK population.

Volunteers will give consent to join the research programme and provide secure access to their health records, complete a questionnaire, have a blood sample taken, and physical measurements. They will also be offered information about their own health, including BP and cholesterol levels. The programme aims to minimise workload for GPs advising patients not to contact practices except in limited circumstances.

Our Future Health has held some webinars for GP practices – the webinar slides, recording and other documents are available [here](#). Please email engage@ourfuturehealth.org.uk for further information.

Wellbeing resources

As we continue to face overwhelming pressures in general practice, we encourage practices to continue to focus on their own team's wellbeing and take some time to meet to reflect on their wellbeing and what they can do to protect it.

This will meet the requirements of the QOF targets in the GP contract to do your [quality improvement project on staff wellbeing](#). We have produced a [document](#) which includes some tangible recommendations and tools for improving workload and safe working.

A range of wellbeing and support services are available to doctors, from our 24/7 confidential [counselling and peer support services](#), [NHS practitioner health service](#) and non-medical support services such as [Samaritans](#). The organisation [Doctors in Distress](#) also provides mental health support for health workers in the UK, providing confidential peer support group sessions.

See our [poster with 10 tips to help maintain and support the wellbeing](#) of you and your colleagues.

Please visit the BMA's [wellbeing support services page](#) for more information and resources.

GPC England committee pages and guidance for practices

Read more about the work of the [Committee](#)

Read practical guidance for [GP practices](#)

See the latest update on Twitter: [@BMA_GP / Twitter](#) [@TheBMA / Twitter](#)

Read about BMA in the media: [BMA media centre | British Medical Association](#)

Contact us: info.GPC@bma.org.uk

Read the last bulletin: [NHSPS service charge success | accelerated access to records guidance | parliamentary activity](#)

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