

Primary Care Directorate  
GP Contract Division



Scottish Government  
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### Addresses

#### For Action

Chief Executives NHS Boards  
General Medical Practitioners

#### For information

Director of Practitioner Services  
Division, NHS National Services Scotland

17 November 2020

Dear Colleague

### Enquiries to:

Michael Taylor  
Tel: 0131-244 5483

[Michael.taylor@gov.scot](mailto:Michael.taylor@gov.scot)

### GP Practices – Additional Funding – COVID-19 - update

1. This circular provides an update on additional funding for GP practices for reasonable COVID-19 expenses. It does not cover expenses related to remobilization of services.
2. The Scottish Government has been clear since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic that no GP practice should be left out of pocket, or have any financial detriment as a result of responding to COVID-19. Additional work incurred by practices at this time and any reasonable additional expenses will be funded, while other routine General Practice income has been protected throughout.

### Purpose of this circular

3. On 7 April 2020, the Scottish Government announced additional funding of £15 million to be shared across all GP practices for the period from 3 March 2020 to recognise the impending pressure on General Practice from COVID-19. Scottish Government and BMA Scottish GP Committee (SGPC) agreed that no practice should receive less than £4,000 and the remainder of the £15 million sum (excluding £5 million for the April Public Holidays) would be distributed to practices by the Scottish Workload Formula (plus Income & Expenses Guarantee).
4. [PCA\(M\)\(2020\)06](#) and [PCA\(M\)\(2020\)09](#) advised practices of the process and timescales for submitting claims against this additional funding up to end of June 2020.
5. The Scottish Government have, in consultation with SGPC, decided to make some changes to the process for claiming additional funding for reasonable COVID-19 related expenses to reflect the fact that there have been an increase in positive test results across Scotland in recent weeks.

### What is staying the same?

6. The Scottish Government remains committed to ensuring that no GP practice faces any financial detriment as a result of responding to COVID-19.

7. The money we provided in April will remain available to practices for the rest of financial year 2020-21, and practices will be able to claim more than this, if needed, from their Health Board or PSD (depending on local arrangements) at regular intervals throughout the rest of 2020-21 (until the end of March 2021). The process for making these claims has not changed.
8. Reasonable COVID-19 related costs, as with all costs undertaken with public money, should be made with a focus on ensuring value for public money at all times. As before all costs should be reasonable, COVID-19 related and in line with approved national guidelines.
9. There may be a small number of practices who will suffer a cash-flow issue if they have to make a significant COVID-19 related expenditure and wait for the next PSD reimbursement. Scottish Government have been clear that in this unlikely event, practices should engage with their local Primary Care Team, at the earliest opportunity who will arrange for a further cash advance to cover this expense. This commitment is not changing.
10. Furthermore, for any practice that has not spent their initial (April 2020) allocation by the end of the financial year, PSD (on behalf of the board) will reconcile any balances at the end of the financial year and make recoveries relating to any underspends.

### **What is changing?**

11. In April 2020 the [Statement of Financial Entitlement](#) (the SFE) was updated to reflect the arrangements for sickness leave reimbursement costs for locums. Previously these costs would be reimbursed from day 15 but this change to the SFE meant that claims would be reimbursed from day 1, recognising the additional pressure COVID-19 could have on practice headcount. Given the reduction in cases over the Summer, the change was reversed on 15 October. However, Scottish Government have agreed with SGPC that we will reintroduce the change from **15 October**. From today, practices can once again claim sickness leave reimbursement costs for locums from day 1 of the absence. Health Boards should be notified on day 1 to facilitate claims but are not required to approve them.
12. Similarly GP partner or staff expenses for self-isolation cover/ backfill and additional COVID-19 related work does not need to be agreed in advance by practices with their Health Board from 15 October. Where appropriate e.g. pregnancy or long term absences, appropriate advice should be sought from the GP Occupational Health Service
13. In April, Scottish Government also allowed payments to be made for non-staff expenses without pre-approval from Boards. This was, like the sickness absence issue discussed above, reversed on 28 July 2020 by circular [PCA\(M\)\(2020\)12](#). We have engaged with SGPC on this matter and pre-approval for non-staff expenses below £500 is accordingly waived from 15 October until further notice and does not need to be agreed in advance by practices with their Health Board. Practices should however make their Health Board aware as soon as possible.
14. Covid related non-staff expenses of less than £500 that were submitted for approval between 28 July and 15 October and which were rejected by Health Boards should not be resubmitted unless there is new evidence that the expenses are required to meet the current situation which includes increasing prevalence of COVID-19/‘the second wave’.

15. Non-staff expenses which were not submitted for approval between 28th July and 15 October should be submitted for approval.

### Summary

- Practices have until the end of March 2021 to spend their share of the initial COVID-19 advance payments, if appropriate COVID-19 expenses arise;
- Approved COVID-19 expenses that exceed practices' initial allocations will be reimbursed in due course;
- If any practice has cash-flow issues as a result of any reasonable COVID-19 related expenses and therefore cannot wait for further reimbursement from PSD they are asked to contact their local Primary Care Team below at their earliest opportunity. Scottish Government can then arrange an advance to be paid directly to the practice;
- Arrangements in place temporarily during March – June 2020 around pre-approval of expenses from Boards, and the point at which locum cover can be claimed for via the SFE will be reinstated from 15 October; and
- Scottish Government intends to issue a circular confirming the revised Statement of Financial Entitlement for the period between 28 July 2020 and 14 October and reinstating the waiver of pre-approval from 15 October.

### ACTION

16. NHS Boards are requested to bring this circular to the attention of all GP contractors. Please bring policy enquiries to the attention of Michael Taylor ([Michael.taylor@gov.scot](mailto:Michael.taylor@gov.scot)).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Naureen" followed by a stylized circular flourish.

Naureen Ahmad

Deputy Director and Head of GP Contract Division