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*(See attached file: Discussion points for GP practices taking time to reflect.pdf)(See attached file: Template letter to PPG.pdf)(See attached file: Script for practice answer machines.pdf)(See attached file: Template letter to PPGs and answerphone script.docx)*

Dear LMC

The [recent death of Dr Gail Milligan](https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/bma-offers-deepest-condolences-to-family-of-surrey-gp-dr-gail-milligan) has again highlighted to us all the pressures that we face each day in general practice. While no one can truly understand what Gail was going through at the time, it appears that the intolerable workload and pressures faced as a GP impacted detrimentally on her mental health.

Unfortunately, Gail is not the first person working in general practice who felt they had no other option than to take their own life, and this is unacceptable. Suicide is preventable

We have a duty to remember Gail and others like her, and a responsibility to prevent the loss of more colleagues in the same way. 10th September 2022 is [World Suicide Prevention Day](https://www.iasp.info/2022/08/04/world-suicide-prevention-day-2022/%5Ch). To this end the *BMA is encouraging all GP practices in England on Friday 9th September,* to spend some time focusing on their own wellbeing and identifying the best ways of supporting each other’s mental health.

As part of this time to reflect we also suggest that you think about how you manage your workload (as set out [Workload Control in General Practice](https://www.bma.org.uk/media/1145/workload-control-general-practice-mar2018-1.pdf%5Ch) and [Safe working in general practice](https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/managing-workload/safe-working-in-general-practice%5Ch) documents). This time for reflection should be protected time for all practice members to come together.  To facilitate this, we recommend that practices find an appropriate time, during which you provide emergency cover*, directing other enquiries to NHS 111 where appropriate*.

In advance of 9th September practices should write to their Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) to explain that you will have reduced service for this time.  The GMS contract allows you to deliver services “in the manner determined by the contractor's practice in discussion with the patient”, so if the PPG is happy for this temporary service variation, you are legitimately able to do this. You can use our [template letter](https://bma-mail.org.uk/t/JVX-7ZX47-JCJOU4-4WGEB5-1/c.aspx) attached as a basis for writing to your PPG. Once you have contacted your PPG, you may also wish to alert your commissioner of your plans.

The BMA has consistently raised the importance of urgently addressing factors impacting on GP health and wellbeing in meetings with government and the opposition. We have most recently raised our concerns with primary care Minister James Morris MP and the Secretary of State, Steve Barclay MP to highlight the need to protect GPs’ health. We will continue to push for action as the new prime minister is announced and parliament returns in September.

We have also for some time highlighted that general practice workload is far beyond capacity, and expectations of commissioners and government are totally unrealistic given the resources available to general practice.  We will continue to lobby for both adequate resource and protected and capped workload, and this will be central in our upcoming negotiations for a new GMS contract.

We would urge LMCs to work with practices to ensure they take the time to consider their wellbeing and how important maintaining this is, for themselves and their patients.  Please use 9th September 2022 as an opportunity to improve the safety of practices and patients by using our attached document on [suggested discussion points](https://i.emlfiles4.com/cmpdoc/3/7/7/5/2/files/985859_discussion-points-for-gp-practices-taking-time-to-reflect-1.pdf?utm_source=The%20British%20Medical%20Association&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=13433191_GP%20wellbeing&dm_t=0,0,0,0,0) for the practice during this protected time. We have also drafted a [suggested answering phone message](https://i.emlfiles4.com/cmpdoc/3/7/7/5/2/files/985829_script-for-practice-answer-machines.pdf?utm_source=The%20British%20Medical%20Association&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=13433191_GP%20wellbeing&dm_t=0,0,0,0,0) for practices (also attached).

LMCs could lead a virtual check-in for those GPs that want to take part, but their practice feels unable to do so. This could be a one hour Teams link for colleagues to log into for as long as you are able and to catch up and chat about wellbeing and workload, which would allow GPs to join for the amount of time they have available, for a chat or discussion.Practices could also consider embedding this time of reflection as a monthly practice event to support wellbeing.

We will provide practices with further information and tools for reducing their workload burden, and provide guidance on how to improve the safety and wellbeing of their workforce, next week. We will also be producing further safe working guidance, as well inviting practices and LMCs to contact us with any queries that they have.

Read our message to [members](https://bma-mail.org.uk/t/JVX-7ZX47-EC5E0CEA0D8A5317JCJOU4BA186991484320BE/cr.aspx)

**Wellbeing**

A range of wellbeing and support services are available to doctors, and we encourage anybody who is feeling under strain to seek support. Please take a moment to check in on your colleagues’ wellbeing and look out for each other.

Support comes in various forms, from the **BMA’s 24/7 confidential** [**counselling and peer support services**](https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/your-wellbeing/wellbeing-support-services/counselling-and-peer-support-services) to networking groups and wellbeing hubs with peers, as well as the [**NHS practitioner health service**](https://www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk/accessing-the-service) and non-medical support services such as [**Samaritans**](https://www.samaritans.org/).

The[**Louise Tebboth Foundation**](https://www.louisetebboth.org.uk/) is a charity that campaigns for the prevention of suicide and the mental wellbeing of doctors in England and Wales

The organisation [**Doctors in Distress**](https://doctors-in-distress.org.uk/) also provides mental health support for health workers in the UK, providing confidential peer support group sessions, and we are grateful for the work they are doing for the profession.

We have published a [**poster with 10 top tips to help maintain and support the wellbein**g](https://www.bma.org.uk/media/6068/wellbeing-top-tips-poster-2022.pdf) of your colleagues and yourself.

Specialist services are also available, helping doctors with specific issues ranging from COVID and addiction to financial and legal assistance. Most services are free and available to all doctors and medical students, not just BMA members. Please do not hesitate to reach out.

Please visit the BMA’s dedicated [wellbeing support services page](https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/your-wellbeing/wellbeing-support-services/sources-of-support-for-your-wellbeing) and for further information see our [extended directory](https://www.bma.org.uk/media/6063/20220380-wellbeing-support-services-directory-update-august-2022.pdf).

**For all other support, speak to a BMA adviser on** **0330 123 1245****or email****support@bma.org.uk****. We encourage you to access any, or all, of the forms of support mentioned above, and encourage colleagues to do so too.**

**Please let us know what changes you would like to make in your practice following these discussions, so that GPC England team can develop the tools to enable this:**

**GP practices:** **info.gpc@bma.org.uk**

**LMCs:** **info.lmcqueries@bma.org.uk**