

News from the GPC

New GP access regulations On 15 May, the new access regulations come into force for GMS and PMS contract-holders. These changes were imposed after GPC England roundly rejected NHSE's proposals for the 2023/24 year.

The access regulations are fundamentally misconceived. It is not possible to meaningfully increase patient access without dealing with the issue throttling the access in the first place – workload and capacity in general practice. During contract negotiations we made clear our concern with this superficial approach to dealing with systemic problems, and forcefully bargained for real solutions. Unfortunately, our proposals were rejected, and the Government has elected to push forward with these changes.

We have developed [guidance](#) for practices to help them navigate this. The key change practices need to be aware of is that patients cannot be asked to call back another day; instead, patients must be offered an appointment, offered “appropriate advice or care”, signposted to a service or resource, asked to provide further information, or informed as to when they will receive further information about the services that may be provided (having regard to urgency of clinical needs and other relevant circumstances).

Workforce data

The latest GP workforce data, shows that GP practices across England continue to experience significant and growing strain with declining GP numbers, rising patient demand, and struggles to recruit and retain staff.

This coincides with a rise in patients: as of March 2023, there was a record-high of over 62.4 million patients registered with practices in England, resulting in another record-high average of 9,740 patients per practice, or 2,285 patients for each full-time equivalent GP. This is an increase of 348 patients per GP, or 18%, since 2015.

The latest GP Appointments data show that 31.6 million GP appointments were booked in March 2023, which is 4.3 million more than in February 2023, and 1.9 million more GP appointments than in March 2022, which is a significant increase and which demonstrates the increasing workload pressure on GPs.

Workforce returns

Please continue to review your workforce returns to ensure they capture all hours worked in an average week, including CPD time, which may be done at home. For salaried doctors the value in the contracted hours box is used in the returns. For contractors and zero-hours salaried doctors it is the actual hours box that is used. If you are unsure which box to use, please put the actual hours worked per week in both boxes. The website to file returns can be found here

<https://datacollection.sdcs.digital.nhs.uk/>