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**To:**  
GP practices and primary care networks  
STP accountable officers  
CCG accountable officers  
Regional directors of primary care

NHS England and NHS Improvement  
Skipton House  
London Road  
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11 August 2020

Dear Colleagues,

## **EXPANDING THE PRIMARY CARE WORKFORCE IN 2020/21**

The [31 July system letter](#) and the [People Plan 2020/21](#) referred to expanding the primary care workforce as an immediate priority for all systems.

For primary care, this is one of our most important tasks, because additional team members will support us to:

- improve working lives for primary care professionals;
- deal with the backlog of unmet health needs arising during the pandemic;
- tackle health inequalities highlighted by COVID;
- restore activity to usual levels where clinically appropriate and expand the flu vaccination programme;
- help address the major underlying workforce and workload challenges facing general practice; and
- support the expansion of multi-disciplinary teams delivering integrated, high quality care.

### **Additional GPs**

Securing additional GP capacity is a critical need for many practices yet at the same time there is also a pool of qualified GPs looking for employment. This includes locums who are interested in more secure employment, retired doctors who have offered to return to the workforce, and newly qualified GPs who graduated from training this August.

To support practices and PCNs recruit, the [New to Partnership Payment Scheme](#), offers a £20,000 incentive and funded CPD for GPs taking partnership roles for the first time.

We have now published the arrangements for the [GP Fellowship Scheme](#) and the [GP Mentors Scheme](#). We encourage all practices and PCNs to make maximum use of all three schemes.

Systems and CCGs will need to put local implementation arrangements in place for the fellowship and mentors scheme, working with their training hubs. The ambition is that as close to 100% as possible of newly-qualified GPs participate in the General Practice Fellowship scheme.

Systems and CCGs will want to develop supportive routes to back to practice for COVID emergency registered practitioners, in order to secure their fullest possible deployment, and work with PCNs to create highly flexible GP salaried roles for those who previously thought that only a career as a locum could offer them the flexibility they need.

### **Additional roles**

The updated GP contract deal provided a legal entitlement to 100% reimbursement for an estimated 9,000 FTEs in 2020/21 under the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, rising to 26,000 in 2023/24. This equates to every PCN having an average of 7-8 staff funded by the ARRS in post in March 2021.

Every CCG has a responsibility to help all their PCNs recruit, supporting them to use their allocation of funding and get their share of the additional roles in place. This will minimise the proportion of the available £430 million which PCNs will not be draw down and will be lost to general practice.

Where recruitment has been delayed due to the initial pandemic response, PCNs are entitled to 'overrecruit' for the final 6-9 months of the year (i.e. beyond the average 7-8 staff) in order to use their full funding allocation. With the ARRS budget significantly increasing again in 2021/22, CCGs should help all their PCNs be in the strongest possible position to make best of use next year's sum.

NHS England and Improvement has allocated £43 million of funding to systems to for PCN development in 2020/21. This can be used to help support workforce planning and role design, embedding of new roles, and development of effective teams.

Additional funding has also been made available to make it easy for PCNs to secure and [deploy social prescribing link workers](#).

The number of eligible roles expanded in April from two to nine, with further expansion planned in 2021/22 as set out in chapter 1 of the Update to the GP Contract 2020/21. To provide additional flexibility to PCNs now, an additional role will be added 1 October 2020. With agreement of the Chief Nursing officer, nursing associates will be added.

### **CCG and system actions:**

To support PCNs to undertake planning and recruitment exercises, all CCGs and systems will need to:

- engage Clinical Directors in the system's overall workforce strategy and support them to complete the PCN workforce planning exercise;
- develop rotational employment models, convening system partners;
- support PCN recruitment through exercises such as batch recruitment and matching to roles;
- engage with HEE and other local partners to influence workforce supply that meets PCN demand; and
- commit ICS/STP funding for HEE training hubs to support the above in ways set out on the [FutureNHS Collaboration platform](#) (local training hub contacts are available from [traininghubs@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:traininghubs@hee.nhs.uk)).

By 9 September, CCGs will submit collated PCN recruitment plans for 2020/21 to their regional NHS England and Improvement team (NHSEI), copied to [england.primarycareworkforce@nhs.net](mailto:england.primarycareworkforce@nhs.net). NHSEI will provide a CCG aggregation tool to support this process.

By 30 September, systems will have agreed a plan with their NHSEI regional team to enable their PCNs to draw down as much of their share of ARRS funding for 2020/21 as possible.

By 9 November, CCGs will follow the same process to submit collated PCN recruitment plans for 2021/22 – 2023/24 to their regional NHSEI teams and by 30 November the plans for the remaining years will be agreed between systems and regional teams.

### **PCN actions:**

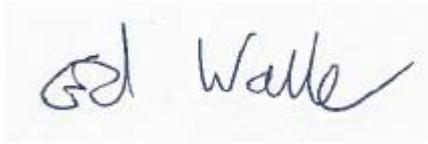
We encourage all PCNs to plan to take full advantage of your guaranteed funding, recruiting as soon as possible and focusing on this as a key priority for the remainder of the year, to support both delivery of care and ultimately improving our working lives.

During COVID, NHS England and Improvement extended the deadline for completing the simple [workforce planning template](#) from 30 June to 31 August. This Network Contract DES contractual requirement enables PCNs to set out their recruitment intentions for the remainder of 2020/21.

Getting a good initial understanding of PCN ambitions for 2021/22 – 2023/24 will also help ensure alignment between PCN demand and available workforce supply at a system, regional and national level. PCNs should complete the 2021/22 – 2023/24 section by 31 October.

We hope this letter sets out a helpful pathway to support the much needed growth of the primary care workforce.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Ed Waller in blue ink on a light background.

**Ed Waller**  
**Director for Primary Care Strategy**  
**and NHS Contracts**  
**NHS England and NHS Improvement**

Handwritten signature of Dr Nikki Kanani in black ink on a light background.

**Dr Nikki Kanani**  
**Medical Director for Primary Care**  
**NHS England and NHS Improvement**