

Welcome to the Patients Association's Weekly News

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Patients Association welcomes restoration of in-person GP appointments



The Patients Association has warmly welcomed the new requirements on GP practices to offer face to face appointments to patients who want them.

Rachel Power, Chief Executive of the Patients Association, said: “Patients have made clear how difficult they have been finding access to GP services, and that most commonly they clearly prefer to see their GP in person. We called for the restoration of in-person appointments as the default option when we published [our second Pandemic Patient Experience report](#), which showed starkly how patients have been struggling to access primary care in a way that meets their needs.

“It will be a great relief to many patients to know that their GP should now unquestionably be offering face to

face appointments. We saw how media reports of our findings clearly resonated with patients and arose strong feelings. We hope that many patients will now be able to rebuild their relationships with their GPs and benefit from the assurance that will bring them.”

[The NHS's new instructions to GPs](#) require them to make, “a clear offer of appointments in person,” and, “respect preferences for face to face care unless there are good reasons to the contrary.” The instruction to identify patients’ preferences is clear: remote consultations will still be available for those who prefer them, but the letter to GPs observes that some patients have struggled to use new forms of access.

GPs will still be allowed to arrange a remote appointment in the first instance, if the patient reports having COVID symptoms.

[Read more](#)

Patients Association supports NHS plans to tackle waiting lists



The NHS this week announced a £160 million initiative to tackle waiting lists that have built up during the pandemic.

The money will fund trials in a dozen areas and five specialist children’s hospitals that the NHS is describing as ‘elective accelerators’; these sites will implement and evaluate ways to increase the number of elective operations they deliver.

We have been working with NHS England to support this initiative by advising on principles for effective communication with patients about their elective treatment.

Rachel Power, our Chief Executive, said: “The lengthening of waiting times due to COVID-19 has been well publicised, and patients are anxious about what this will mean for them. This worry comes on top of the impact of having to live for longer with the pain or discomfort of their condition, and for many is compounded by having had multiple appointments postponed or cancelled.

“Steps to accelerate the recovery of elective treatment are, therefore, very welcome – the importance of treatment being timely, to ensure the best possible outcomes, is well recognised. Effective communication with patients at this critical juncture is an essential.”

NHS Complaints Summit



Our chair, Lucy Watson, chaired yesterday’s National Virtual Complaints Summit, aimed at NHS staff who handle, investigate, and resolve patient complaints.

The summit aims to improve the effectiveness of complaints handling and ensure that complaints lead to change and improvements in patient care.

Lucy said of the event: “It was a great meeting, delivering a strong message about patient partnership and personal contact, the importance of really listening and understanding the concerns being raised by the patient and their family so these can be properly investigated, and reminding attendees of the importance of really saying sorry for what has happened.”

The conference also updated delegates on the NHS Complaints Standard, which was published by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman in March. The Standard is being tested in pilot sites in 2021 with the goal of refining and introducing it across the NHS in 2022.

Have your say: effects of health conditions on partners and family members



The lives of partners and family members are often affected by a person's health condition, but this important impact is often ignored.

Researchers at Cardiff University have created a simple questionnaire, the 'Family Reported Outcome Measure' (FROM-16), to measure this. They are seeking your help to test this questionnaire, before it can be used routinely to better understand and care for the health and social needs of partners and families.

If you have any health condition, or your partner or a family member (aged 18 or over) does, please complete the five-minute survey.

[Take the survey](#)

HSIB Citizens' Partnership member recruitment



The Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch is looking for seven 'exceptional individuals' to join its Citizens' Partnership.

HSIB conducts independent investigations of patient safety concerns in NHS-funded care across England. The Citizens' Partnership will be impartial, providing an independent view of the work of HSIB that is external to its day-to-day running. It will focus on raising public awareness of HSIB's work, co-designing and providing feedback on products as well as supporting specific workstreams as required.

The closing date for applications is 31 May 2021 with virtual interviews planned for 23 June 2021. For full details of the role, including remuneration visit the HSIB site.

[Find out more](#)

Bring your voice to NHS specialised services



NHS England and NHS Improvement is recruiting to a range of Patient Public Voice (PPV) partner roles on groups with responsibility for the commissioning of specialised services.

These PPV roles support the commissioning of often rare and complex specialised services across England. This includes treatment for rare cancers, genetic disorders, or complex medical conditions or surgical procedures. PPV partners ensure patients and the public are at the heart of specialised commissioning - informing, supporting and influencing the work of Programmes of Care and Clinical Reference Groups.

All roles currently open to applications are considered Expert PPV Advisor roles and, in line with the NHS England and NHS Improvement's PPV policy, have an attached involvement fee which PPV partners are eligible to claim.

Watch this [video](#) and read this [blog](#) to hear from specialised commissioning PPV partners about how their involvement has an impact.

The closing date for applications is 20 June 2021.

If you have questions about any of these roles, please email england.voice-crg@nhs.net.
For full details of the roles and how to apply, click the button below.

[Get involved](#)

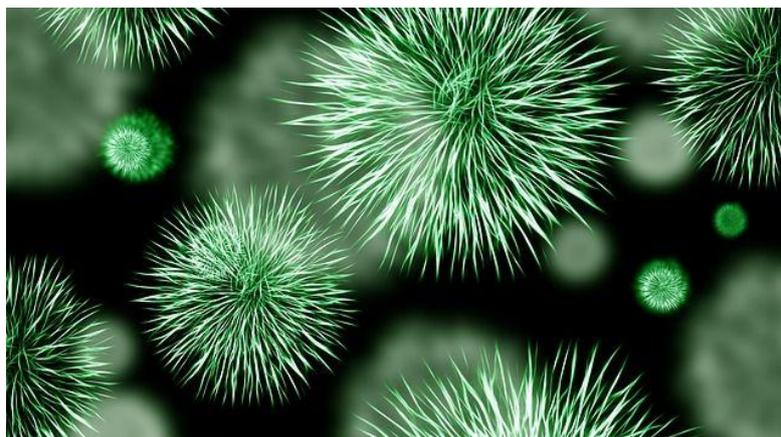
Still open for your opinions



Our shared decision-making survey is an important part of our ongoing work to empower and enable patients to have a greater say in decisions about their care and treatment. It asks you a few questions about the role you play in your own health, and how you feel about this.

[Take the survey](#)

Seeking participants for a virtual patient advisory group on tackling antibiotic resistance



Antibiotics play a crucial role in treating infections. Antimicrobial resistance (or antibiotic resistance) occurs when a microorganism (bacteria, virus, fungi, parasite) no longer responds to an antibiotic. These 'superbugs' make infections harder to treat, which can increase the risk of the infection/disease spreading, severe illness and death.

The rising rates of antibiotic resistant 'superbugs' is of great concern for everyone, especially in patients whose care has been affected by infection. Patients can play a key role in safeguarding against antibiotic resistance by actively engaging and participating in their care and to be stewards of appropriate use of antibiotics.

Pfizer will be hosting a Patient Advisory Group to learn more about the experiences and insights of patients who have had to deal with severe infections due to antibiotic resistance, with the goal of elevating the patient voice in the fight against 'superbugs' and the rising challenge of antibiotic resistance. Pfizer has engaged the Patients Association to help convene and co-chair the Patient Advisory Group.

The Patient Advisory Group will help Pfizer to:

- Understand patient perspectives regarding antibiotic resistance and identify meaningful initiatives to involve patients in safeguarding the appropriate use of antibiotics
- Empower patients to see themselves as owners of their medical history and partners in determining the best treatment plans for them
- Raise awareness about antibiotic resistance among patients and communities
- Shape its future work to address the rising rates of antibiotic resistance

Pfizer is seeking patients who meet the following criteria:

- Adult UK residents only
- Experience with bacterial infections* that have required recurrent and/or prolonged courses of intravenous antibiotics in a hospital setting only (e.g., hospital medical or surgical ward, ambulatory care, clinic environments).

**bacterial infections, such as (but not limited to) urine infection, chest infections, pneumonia, skin infections, etc.*

The Patient Advisory Group will be convened in early June for a 3 hour virtual meeting. Pfizer will reimburse participants £81 per hour. If you meet these criteria and would like to be considered for the Patient Advisory Group, please contact Sharrie McIntosh, sharrie.mcintosh@patients-association.org.uk.

From the helpline



Gillian*, who lives in England, rang to get advice about how to get a face-to-face appointment with her GP, after being told she had to use an online system to book an appointment of any kind.

She had wanted to see a GP because she was concerned about the large number of moles on her back. But when she called her practice to make an appointment, she was told that she should make an eConsult request online. She was unable to book a face-to-face appointment but booked a telephone consultation instead.

Gillian called the helpline because she was concerned about her practice introducing this eConsult system; she told our adviser she believed it would exclude many patients.

Our adviser told Gillian she could contact the practice manager to raise her concerns about the current process and how it may exclude some patients due to them having a lack of IT or being uncomfortable in using it, and suggested she give her feedback to the CQC and write to her CCG to raise her concerns about the current process in use at her surgery.

Our adviser also told Gillian that if she was unable to obtain medical advice or treatment because she couldn't access her GP practice, she should contact NHS 111 service.

* Name changed for privacy.

To share your experiences with our helpline team, call 0800 3457115 between 9.30am and 5pm on weekdays or email helpline@patients-association.org.uk. See [our website](#) for more ways to get in touch.

What our team is reading this week

[UK COVID inquiry: the key areas likely to be scrutinised](#)

[Effects of different types of written vaccination information on COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy](#)

[The opioid crisis and erosion of trust](#)

[RCN launches first-ever workforce standards for staff and patient safety](#)

[UK government 'failed to consider gender' in its response to COVID pandemic](#)

About Us

Our purpose is to ensure that everybody can access and benefit from the health and care they need to live well, by ensuring that services are designed and delivered through equal partnership with patients.

Our strategic focus for 2021-25 is patient partnership in the design and delivery of health and care services.

We are a registered charity raising all our own funds. If you'd like to support our work for all patients and make a difference, please [donate or consider making a regular donation](#). Thank you.



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