

Dear colleagues

We are writing to you in advance of the Easter Weekend, a time that is usually a welcome break for most of us but which will be severely curtailed this year by the need for social distancing and avoiding friends and family we do not live with. Even so it will be a break for many people who are working hard at this difficult time.

However, we are all aware of the unprecedented situation with the current Covid-19 pandemic, and the predictions of increasing numbers of patients over the next few weeks needing our general practice, hospital and out-of-hour services. **For this reason, we are asking all practices to open during the April public holidays including Good Friday and Easter Monday, unless it is unsafe or otherwise impossible to do so.**

We know that this is a difficult message to receive at a time where practices are working extremely hard under difficult circumstances. We absolutely recognise the additional work that practices are doing. The Scottish Government and the Scottish GP Committee of BMA Scotland are working to establish additional financial support for you:

- There will be advance funding for all practices to cover the initial additional costs of the Covid response (£15m overall). The money will be allocated using each practice's share of funding (including the Income & Expenses Guarantee) with an adjustment so that every practice will receive at least £4,000.
- In the first instance, this money funds practices' additional work to open on the April public holidays (the cost of these public holidays is calculated at £5.1 million – 1/126th of the value of the Global Sum and the total Income & Expenses Guarantees or 0.8% of the value of your contract).
- Beyond that, £9.9m of this advance funding is to be used for extra Covid-related expenditure on equipment, non-clinical staff costs, salaried/sessional clinical staff costs, GP partner costs and locum cover for sickness leave. This expenditure needs to be recorded so that payments can be reconciled after the outbreak is over (any additional expenditure beyond the initial allocation will also be reimbursed).

We have agreed to remove the two-week absence requirement and double the maximum weekly cap for reimbursements covering sickness leave. From 3rd March 2020 practices will be able to claim locum payments from the first day of sickness up to £3,468.36 per week. These payments can continue to be used for internal or external locum cover. An interim Statement of Financial Entitlements will be issued shortly to reflect these arrangements.

We recognise that there may be some practices that are not able to provide services during the Easter public holidays because of GP partner sickness leave or where it is not possible to work during self-isolation. In these circumstances there should already be alternative local arrangements in place, including practice buddying as outlined here: [PCA\(M\)\(2020\)02](#)

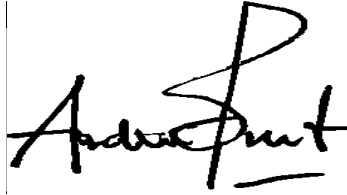
Not all practices will be under the same amount of pressure at this time; if your practice is able to take the holiday without detriment to your patients you can do so by agreement with your

Health Board. This can only be agreed by practices which have not agreed any level 2 or 3 reductions of services and means foregoing the compensation.

With gratitude for the additional workload you are carrying, and the professionalism shown at this difficult time.



Jeane Freeman MSP,
Cabinet Secretary for Health
and Sport



Dr Andrew Buist, Chair of the
Scottish General Practitioners
Committee of the BMA