

## Covid-19

## ----- Guidance for practices



**Date: 6.5.2020**

**Please be aware that this is a rapidly evolving situation.**

### **Patient registration during the Covid-19 pandemic**

#### **General**

During the current Covid-19 pandemic, practices should continue to register patients, although the process may be different. It is important to ensure that patients are registered and continue to have access to primary medical services during the Covid-19 crisis. Therefore, we would like to clarify the application requirements regarding new patient registrations at this time to facilitate and simplify the registration process as much as possible.

#### **Contractual requirements**

The Contract regulations require that “an application for inclusion in a contractor's list of patients must be made by delivering to the GP practice premises a medical card or an application signed (in either case) by the applicant or a person authorised by the applicant to sign on the applicant's behalf”.

#### **Remote and more flexible registration process**

Applying to register with a practice is normally done through completion of a GMS1 form.

**However, we suggest that in the current situation, delivery of a completed GMS1 form may be by any means, including by post and digital options. A signed, scanned application or picture of a signed application emailed to the practice is acceptable under the Contract Regulations.**

Please ensure that your website is updated to reflect these changes:

#### *Either*

- Make the original [GMS1 form](#) available on your practice website in a format that enables patients to complete it online.
- The new patient health questionnaire should also be available ideally on the same web page

#### *Or*

- Create a registration page on your website which includes all the fields of the GMS1 form and continue with all the fields of a new patient health questionnaire on the same page. This will ensure that patients only need to visit one web page to complete their online registration.

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Online GMS1 forms cannot be physically signed by patients, so these are some practical options that can be adopted:

- Patient completes and submits the online GMS1 form and agrees with practice that they will attend the practice at a later stage to physically sign it. Practice maintains a record of all online registrations.
- Patient completes and submits the online GMS1 form and sends the accompanying signed letter to the practice ([Appendix A](#)), confirming that they were the person that sent the GMS1 form. This can be sent via email or post. In this case the patient will not need to attend the practice at a later stage to physically sign the GMS1 form.
- The practice has a system where they will post GMS1 forms and a new patient health questionnaire to patients who do not have access to a computer. The completed forms can then be posted back to the practice.

Please ensure that you follow your usual registration processes as closely as possible but consider providing added flexibility to reflect the current circumstances. Patients should avoid attending the practice in person to sign forms during the pandemic crisis.

Practices must, however, ensure that where online registration solutions are used, all GMS1 fields are collected and relevant information entered into the clinical system during registration. This will ensure that Primary Care Support England (PCSE) can process the registration application.

The registration process should be completed as quickly as possible where people need urgent access to health care.

### **Registration of patients with no fixed address, asylum seekers and refugees**

Practices should continue to register all new patients, including those with no fixed address, asylum seekers and refugees. Practices should decide how they can most effectively connect with and support locations that are accommodating people who are homeless.

We would like to remind GP practices that the absence of photo identification or a fixed address is not a valid reason to refuse a patient registration. Homeless patients should be registered either at a c/o address where one is available (e.g. a shelter/ support service) or the GP practice address. Use of the GP practice address as a c/o does not place responsibility on the practice to repatriate correspondence (e.g. hospital letters). Homeless patients should be encouraged to keep in contact with the practice at regular intervals where they have ongoing health and care (primary and secondary) requirements.

[Further information on the entitlement of asylum seekers and refugees to register with GP practices can be seen here.](#)

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### Appendix A: Signature Letter for Patients

[Download this template as a Word document.](#)

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel Number

Date

Dear [Name of practice]

Please find enclosed the following forms:

#### **GMS1 Form**

#### **New Patient Health Questionnaire**

I confirm that these forms have been completed by me, I am the named person on the form and the information I have provided is correct.

Please process my application to register with your practice.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full Name

#### **PLEASE NOTE**

If someone else is submitting this form at my request, please see declaration below -

This form has been completed on my behalf by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to patient