



## GPs in England get 1% pay increase and £60m towards indemnity fees

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GPs in England will receive a 1% increase to their pay and £60m (€68m; \$84m) towards indemnity fees, under changes to the general medical services contract announced by NHS England on 20 March.

It said that the contract would deliver £256.3m of investment in primary care next year, 3.4% higher than in 2017-18.

GPs will receive an initial 1% pay uplift, as well as an inflationary uplift to expenses, which is expected to be increased further when the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB) makes its recommendations later this year. Any further increase will be backdated to 1 April, when the changes take effect.

The changes also include uplifts for specific vaccinations, improvements in funding for cover for sickness absence and maternity, parental, and adoption leave, and strengthened regulations on violent patients.

There will also be a complete rollout of the electronic prescription service, which NHS England says will save time in GP appointments. And the pilot in which the NHS 111 service directly books appointments at general practices will be extended.

A further £10m will be invested to support full implementation of the e-referral service, so that it is available at every practice by October this year. The service allows GPs and patients to identify the hospitals with the shortest waiting lists and speeds up the process of booking the first consultant appointment.

By autumn all parts of England will offer evening and weekend GP appointments, with local practices working together to ensure availability in each area, said NHS England.

The contract agreement also makes it clear that practices must not advertise private GP services where that service should be provided free of charge on the NHS.

Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England, said, "The 2018-19 contract is a further concrete step in investing in and strengthening good practice, which is at the heart of our modern NHS."

Richard Vautrey, chair of the BMA's General Practitioners Committee for England, said that the changes would provide stability to practices at a time when little else was stable in the profession. "For too long, GPs' pay has been in decline, despite working harder than ever to deliver more appointments in an increasingly under-pressure NHS," he said, "From the outset of these negotiations we have been resolute that we would not accept a 1% uplift for pay and expenses but made it clear that after a decade of pay cuts it is time that GPs and their staff received a proper pay increase. We have therefore provided strong evidence to the DDRB that doctors should be given an uplift of RPI [retail prices index] plus 2%, to bring us in line with the wider economy, and we expect the government to fund any DDRB recommendation."

He said that the BMA would be working with NHS England on several areas this year, including a major review of GP premises, wider use of social prescribing to reduce practice workload, the state backed indemnity scheme, and a review of QOF.