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## Covid-19: GPs need extra support to withstand second wave, BMA warns

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General practices will struggle to cope with a second wave of covid-19 unless urgent measures are put in place to support them, the BMA has warned.

It said that practices in England were reporting that they did not have the capacity to carry out all of the work required of them while managing ongoing patient care, dealing with the backlog of care put on hold during the first wave of the pandemic, and reconfiguring services.

Richard Vautrey, chair of the BMA's General Practitioners Committee England, said, "GPs, like all doctors, are extremely concerned that without decisive action now services will be overwhelmed if we see another spike in the coming weeks and months."

In a report published on 30 September the committee called for a package of measures to support the GP workforce,<sup>1</sup> including making occupational health services available to all staff to ensure that they are properly risk assessed and to provide free supplies of personal protective equipment. It also called for the suspension of routine inspections by the Care Quality Commission and of the Quality and Outcomes Framework, as part of efforts to reduce bureaucracy.

NHS England's covid support fund for practices should be rolled over until March 2021 and expanded to ensure that all additional costs such as additional telephony and cleaning are included, it added.

The report called for practices to receive extra funding for equipment to facilitate home working for staff who require it, as well as structural changes to surgery buildings to allow enhanced social distancing and infection control to protect patients and staff. It said that practices also need funding and equipment to continue digital triage and consultations while ensuring the option of a face-to-face appointment when clinically necessary.

Vautrey said, "The measures we've outlined are aimed at supporting practices and their staff to deliver high quality care while managing the increased pressures of doing so during a pandemic, and it is vital that the government and NHS England listen and implement these urgently, to ensure that primary care can continue to operate safely through what looks to be an incredibly difficult winter."

1 BMA. COVID-19: general practice during the second wave. 30 Sep 2020. <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/gp-practices/covid-19-general-practice-during-the-second-wave>.

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