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Covid-19: Payment to general practices to deliver vaccines to be cut by 25%

Elisabeth Mahase

The payment that general practices will receive for administering covid-19 vaccines during the upcoming autumn booster rollout will be reduced by a quarter, NHS England has decided.¹

Practices previously received £10.06 (€11.65; \$12.80) for each vaccination administered to each patient.² However, under the new enhanced service specification practices will receive £7.54 per vaccination per patient from 1 September 2023, unless the patient is housebound, whereby the practice will receive £10.00. This contract runs until 31 March 2024.

The BMA has argued that NHS England's decision to "significantly reduce" the fee "undervalues general practice and threatens the safety of vulnerable patients."

The final decision on the fee was made after talks between the BMA and NHS England, during which the BMA said it had "made clear that many practices would find it difficult to deliver the covid vaccination programme this autumn with a 25% fee reduction."

Commenting on the move, the BMA's newly elected chair of the General Practitioners Committee for England, Katie Bramall-Stainer,³ said, "Patients and GPs alike will despair that NHS England has announced substantial cuts to funding and resource of this national vaccination programme on the same day as news stories detail the arrival of a fresh covid variant.

"It is disappointing that practices will be put in a position where they are no longer able to deliver this, through no fault of their own, due to shortsighted cuts. The covid vaccine delivery process is twice as long as administering flu jabs, and NHSE knows this. Our patients and communities need to be protected and our practices resourced and supported to undertake this important work."

Responding to the claims, an NHS England spokesperson said, "The revised fee will sufficiently cover the average cost of vaccinating someone against covid as part of what is now a more predictable, seasonal offer.

"The NHS is working with vaccine sites to ensure a growing number offer both flu and covid vaccinations at the same time where possible, to make it more convenient for people to get this lifesaving protection ahead of winter, with additional payment available for a double jab in a single visit."

The service specification says that practices that sign up before the deadline of 5 pm on 29 August must make arrangements to administer covid vaccines to care home residents and staff, severely immunosuppressed patients, housebound patients, and children aged 6 months to 4 years who are in a clinical risk group.

1 NHS England. Covid-19 vaccination programme: 1 September 2023 to 31 March 2024. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/PRN00629-gp-covid-19-vaccination-es-specification-23-24-august-2023.pdf>.

2 NHS England. Covid-19 vaccination programme: 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2022/06/PRN00325-enhanced-service-specification-covid-19-vaccination-programme-1-sept-22-to-31-aug-23-may-2023.pdf>

3 Rimmer A. BMA's GP committee elects new chair. *BMJ* 2023;382:p. doi: 10.1136/bmj.p1810 pmid: 37541688