



Nottinghamshire 
Local Medical Committee

Representing and supporting GPs

FOCUS ON...

ISSUE 5: NOVEMBER 2022

**PUBLICATION OF GENERAL PRACTICE
APPOINTMENT DATA (GPAD)**

OUR EASY TO READ
SUMMARY OF CURRENT
ISSUES FOR GENERAL
PRACTICE

Publication of General Practice Appointment Data (GPAD)

Earlier this month, NHS England wrote to practices in their Primary Care Bulletin to confirm that on 24 November 2022 NHS Digital plan to publish practice level appointment data. The data will be available in the public domain and can be accessed by patients.

The information being released is:

- Time between booking and appointment date
- Appointment mode
- HCP type (GP, Other or Unknown are the three choices)
- National Appointment category

WHAT IS GPAD?

Since 2018, NHS Digital has been collecting data from general practice appointment systems by place and publishing it. This published data provides a picture of general practice appointments. It includes details such as the number of appointments, the healthcare professional carrying them out, and where possible, the mode of delivery, e.g., face to face, or telephone. The push from the Government for practice level data to be available to the general public comes from the former Health and Care Secretary Therese Coffey's 'Our Plan for Patients' which written in September 2022 states:

"Patients will have more information available to choose the right practice for them. From November 2022, we will publish easy-to-use data showing exactly how many appointments each practice in England is delivering and how long people wait between booking an appointment and receiving one."



For any further support on this or anything else please email us at liaison@nottslmc.co.uk or call on 0115 977 1341.

Publication of General Practice Appointment Data (GPAD)

WHAT IS THE BMA GPC ENGLAND GUIDANCE ON THE PUBLICATION OF GENERAL PRACTICE APPOINTMENT DATA?

GPC England has met with NHS Digital to discuss their plans to publish GP appointments data (GPAD), which will be published in the form of an annex to the current publication. NHS Digital also informed the BMA that this publication will be further updated for April 2023, integrating practice level data into the report and a dashboard of appointment data at a practice level which will be available for Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to access.

Concerns have been raised about the accuracy of the data, and its potential use, and NHS Digital agreed that further work is required. Concerns have been raised with NHS Digital/NHSE that the data is insufficient to draw any conclusions about what is being offered by individual practices. In particular, the reality that significant numbers of patients are seen by experienced clinicians that are not GPs, all of whom are aggregated in the data. NHS Digital/NHSE informed GPCE that there would be caveats in the data making this explicit.

GPCE have stressed to NHSE that GPAD data should not be used in a punitive way, and support of outliers should always be in consultation with LMCS. Any negative rhetoric from the media or misreporting of data will be challenged.

To summarise:

- Practice level data will be published by NHS Digital and available in the public domain on 24 November 2022
- Concerns have been raised about the accuracy and reliability of the data
- This data does not allow comparisons to easily be made, although this may happen.



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WHAT DOES THE CONTRACT SAY ABOUT PROVIDING APPOINTMENTS FOR PATIENTS?

The GP contract states that contractors must provide enough appointments to meet the reasonable need of their patients. However, these must be within safe bounds for patients and GPs and there is guidance on what 'reasonable needs' actually means. They must assess the needs of the patients to ensure that appropriate care is offered to them.

To be clear, within the GP contract, there is no minimum number of appointments practices must provide as the manner in which practices deliver care is up to them.

Existing guidance on safe working in General Practice can be found here. The BMA has also published guidance on workload control in General Practice.

WHAT DOES THE LMC THINK OF THIS?

As independent GP contractors, how practices manage their appointment systems is entirely up to them.

We are against the publishing of such data at this point and urge that it is not misused to target 'outliers' and those appearing to be below arbitrary thresholds.

This could be helpful if it helps decisions makers around resource allocation appreciate how hard practices are working and the sheer volume of demand being expected of practices.



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WHAT DOES THE LMC THINK OF THIS?

We are concerned that the potential of this data being used in league tables/news stories etc. runs the risk of creating further public concern and will have little benefit to GP practices. We will be in conversations with Healthwatch also to help them to understand why this data should be very carefully handled, they may be in contact with patients concerned about the findings.

As your LMC, we have been in conversations with the ICB stressing that when data is published, any conversations by commissioners should be undertaken in a supportive manner. We will support any practice who is contacted by the ICB to discuss data in more detail.

We will be creating patient comms to help support you in your messaging with the general public and have also contacted the local media to ensure they are aware of how careful people need to be not to draw conclusions about practice performance from this data.

DOES THE LMC HAVE ANY FURTHER ADVICE?

- Tell us if you are contacted by the ICB, we can support in any meetings, conversations etc.
- Review and scrutinise the data held on the General Practice Appointments Data (GPAD) private dashboard. A user guide for the dashboard can be found here.
- Contact us if you require communications support particularly around messages to the public.
- Consider capturing patient contacts as appointments to ensure greater visibility of workload



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