**Immediate Release: Monday, 12 September**

**BMA launches new workload resources for GPs to address failure of NHS managers to implement changes to the standard contract**

The BMA’s GP committee has launched a suite of new resources for GPs aimed at helping them reduce unnecessary workload from secondary care providers after the failure of many NHS managers to introduce agreed changes to the standard contract.

After lobbying by the BMA as part of its Urgent Prescription for General Practice campaign, NHS England agreed to make a series of changes to the standard contract this year that governs the relationship between GP practices and NHS secondary care providers. This included:

* Ensuring secondary care providers take responsibility for rearranging appointments with patients who miss clinical appointments. Previously these patients were sent back to their GP for a re-referral, wasting valuable GP appointments.
* Ensuring hospitals communicate test results requested by hospital clinicians directly to the patient, so that patients no longer have to make appointments with GPs to chase up these results.
* Enabling hospitals to make direct onward referrals to other services for a related condition, rather than ask patients to see their GP to make a fresh referral.

However, despite these changes, feedback from GPs suggests that these changes have not been implemented in many parts of the country.

Dr Chaand Nagpaul, BMA GP committee chair, said:

“Following sustained lobbying from the BMA, the NHS standard contract for secondary care trusts was changed during recent negotiations to ensure systems are in place to prevent unnecessary workload being diverted to GPs that could and should be handled by secondary care providers. NHS England estimates that around 15 million appointments1 are wasted because GPs are forced to carry out unnecessary administration like those caused by these issues with the standard contract.

“Despite these new requirements, it is clear many NHS providers are not implementing these changes. The BMA has already ensured NHS England issued an instruction to managers reminding them of their responsibilities2. However, alongside this the BMA is providing GP practices with template letters to redirect inappropriate demands back to hospitals to fulfil their contractual obligations. Practices will also have templates to inform their Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) of any breach of the standard contract, as they have a statutory responsibility to ensure providers comply with their contractual terms. These new resources will also help reduce work and bureaucracy for hospitals themselves, by ending the reprocessing of new referrals when patients miss a clinic appointment

“Given the enormous pressures on general practice from rising demand, falling resources and staff shortages, we need to end the scandalous situation where everyday thousands of patients will see a GP purely for the bureaucratic purpose of re-referring after a missed hospital appointment. This is a waste of precious resources, and is directly denying patients access to GP services. We must use GP appointments for medical reasons, and liberate time for GPs and their staff to care for patients.

The new template letters can be viewed [here.](https://www.bma.org.uk/collective-voice/committees/general-practitioners-committee/gpc-current-issues/nhs-england-standard-hospital-contract-guidance)

**Ends**

**Notes to Editors**

1. Figures from NHS Alliance report, [Making Time in General Practice](http://www.nhsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Making-Time-in-General-Practice-FULL-REPORT-01-10-15.pdf).
2. A copy of the letter sent by NHS England can be viewed [here](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/letter-contract-requirements.pdf).