MINI BULLETIN – 02 March 2024

**Prescription charges**

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is currently unable to confirm whether or not NHS prescription charges will be uplifted in 2024.

The NHS prescription charge and the cost of Prescription Pre-payment Certificates (PPCs) are reviewed annually with changes usually made in April, but this year the Government has yet to conclude consideration of any increase to prescription charges. The current charges will therefore roll over into April 2024 while further consideration is given.

Community Pharmacy England will update community pharmacy teams as soon as any changes are announced by Ministers, including details of when they will be implemented.

In summary:

For prescriptions dispensed in April 2024, NHS prescription charges will remain at £9.65 per item.

The cost of PPCs will also remain unchanged for April 2024.

**GP Practices**

GP Practices delivered 30.5m appointments in February 2023 - 5.5m more than in the same month in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, figures from NHS Digital show.

The latest monthly total represents a 22% rise compared to the same month in 2019 - and has been delivered by a GP workforce that has 3% fewer fully qualified, full-time equivalent GPs now than it did in 2019.

Workforce data show that there were 27,502 fully qualified FTE GPs in February this year, down 984 from March 2019, the closest equivalent figure available for that year.

**Patient engagement**

A PCN must act in accordance with the requirements relating to patient engagement under the PCN’s Core Network Practice’s primary medical services contracts by:

a) Engaging, liaising and communicating with the PCN’s Patients in the most appropriate way.

b) Informing and/or involving them in developing new services and changes related to service delivery; and

c) Engaging with a range of communities, including ‘seldom heard’ groups. A PCN must provide reasonable support and assistance to the commissioner in the performance of its duties22 to engage patients in the provision of and/or reconfiguration of services where applicable to the PCN’s Patients.