

To: All Responsible Officers and Medical Directors in England

Professor Stephen Powis
National Medical Director
Skipton House
80 London Road
SE1 6LH

19 March 2020

Dear Colleague

Covid-19 and professional standards activities (including appraisal and revalidation)

I am writing about changes to professional standards activities in light of the latest Government advice on managing the Covid-19 outbreak. Professional standards activities safeguard patient safety and quality of care, support professional development and ensure that action is taken when concerns arise. However, in the current situation it is entirely appropriate to free up capacity to maintain essential care and minimise spread.

Medical Appraisal

As National Responsible Officer for NHS England and Improvement and the person who delegates the Senior Responsible Owner function for The Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) Regulations 2010 (amended 2013) in England I strongly recommend that appraisals are suspended from the date of this letter until further notice, unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by both the appraisee and appraiser. This should immediately increase capacity in our workforce by allowing appraisers to return to clinical practice.

Until reinstated, Responsible Officers (ROs) should classify appraisals which are affected as 'approved missed' appraisals. For clarity, affected appraisals will be regarded as cancelled, not postponed.

Revalidation decisions

The GMC has now issued guidance that doctors who are due to revalidate before the end of September 2020 will have their revalidation date deferred for one year. This will be kept under review the GMC will make further deferrals as necessary.

This decision has been made to give doctors more time to reschedule and complete appraisals, and to avoid the need for ROs to make revalidation recommendations during this time.

The GMC has started making changes to its systems so that notifications about

NHS England and NHS Improvement



revalidation dates aren't issued. They will continue to send notifications when doctors move on and off GMC connect lists so ROs can keep track of prescribed connections.

Framework for Quality Assurance for Responsible Officers and Revalidation

In keeping with the need to minimise non-direct quality improvement activities, we have decided to cancel the 2019/2020 Annual Organisation Audit, which we had planned to launch on 6 April.

Mandatory training and other activities

Other measures to release clinical capacity and allow focus on the current priority include amending local requirements for mandatory training and other CPD and quality improvement activities not directly relevant to the current outbreak. I encourage ROs to work within their organisations to make sensible changes in these areas.

Responding to concerns about a doctor's practice

Oversight of professional concerns must continue, but as the situation evolves, our priority will be those concerns that are assessed as high risk.

I know that you and your teams are working hard to prepare for the challenge of the coming weeks and months and hope that these measures will help you and your clinicians to focus on best possible care for patients for the duration of this outbreak.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Stephen Powis
National Medical Director
NHS England and NHS Improvement