

RCGP response to Childminder recruitment and retention consultation

Background

The department of education (DE) have opened a consultation to address 'Childminder recruitment and retention'. Part of this is to help streamline the registration process which can often take up to 12 weeks. Ofsted and CMAs (child-minding agencies) ask the applicant to complete a health declaration, which is then verified by the applicant's GP. The GP is not ultimately required to assess the suitability of the applicant to operate as a childminder – this is undertaken by Ofsted or the CMA, sometimes with the input of health assessment organisations. CMAs are required through legislation to make enquiries with an applicant's medical practitioner (GP), while Ofsted carries out the checks as a matter of policy. While these checks are not a contractual obligation, they can be burdensome, and the government has committed to reviewing and reducing such administrative burdens where possible. The DE are considering to expand the range of regulated healthcare professionals working within a GP surgery, who can complete health checks for prospective childminders registering with a CMA. We think this could speed up the process in some cases and remove burdens on GPs, where the GP feels it is appropriate for another regulated healthcare professional to complete the checks.

Consultation deadline: 10th May 2024

Consultation response (relevant question)

To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should expand the range of regulated health care professionals, working within a GP surgery, who can complete health declarations for prospective childminders to include:

- *nurses?*
- *pharmacists?*
- *occupational therapists?*
- *paramedics?*

Agree

The RCGP welcomes conversations which have the potential of improving access within general practice through supporting the reducing of the GP workload. GPs across the UK are facing unprecedented workload and workforce challenges. As of February 2024, NHS data reports the average number of patients per fully qualified FTE GP as one GP per 2,298 patients in England. This ratio continues to rise, meaning that on average, each GP is responsible for 158 additional patients than they were five years ago.

GPs and their teams have been through a significant period of evolution over the past few years including expanding multidisciplinary teams, working at scale collaboration, and finding innovative ways to manage and deliver care. For example, fit note signing was expanded to include other health professions (pharmacists, nurses etc). As a profession, we have always embraced change and reformations which benefit our patients, however there are a few things which must be considered:

- Adequate training and CPD needs to be undertaken.
- Responsibility/liability should be held by the signatory clinicians (GPs can at times still take on the risk/oversight for this clinical task)
- Will this become an additional service? If so, this will need to be adequately funded/reimbursed in order to deliver.