

GPC Parliamentary and Assembly Activity Report

WESTMINSTER

The Parliamentary Unit in London keeps in contact with MPs across all the political parties.

BMA Westminster Political Lectures

The BMA hosted a new series of Westminster Political Lectures in January and February. The lectures were an opportunity for the political parties to explain their policies in relation to the NHS and how these would impact on patients, taxpayers and NHS staff. The audience largely consisted of BMA members, although the media and representatives from other organisations were also invited.

Separate events were held for Norman Lamb MP (Liberal Democrat Shadow Health Secretary), Andrew Lansley MP (Conservative Shadow Health Secretary) and Rt Hon Alan Johnson (Secretary of State for Health). The chief health spokespersons gave an address and then took part in a question and answer session. The lectures can be viewed at: www.bma.org.uk/whats_on/WestminsterLectures2009.jsp?page=1

Meetings with key MPs

On February 25th, the GPC Negotiators are due to meet the primary care leads of the Conservative Health Team (Andrew Lansley MP, Mark Simmonds MP and Earl Howe) to have further in-depth discussions on Conservative health policy. A dinner between the MPs on the Health Select Committee and various BMA chairs of committee is planned to take place in March.

Health Bill

The Health Bill contains a number of measures on a NHS constitution, quality accounts, direct payments, innovation prizes, tobacco control, pharmaceutical services and disclosure of information by HMRC in relation to GP and dentists' income. The BMA has been briefing MPs on the Bill and the BMA's briefing can be viewed at: www.bma.org.uk/news/lobbying_campaigning/Healthbilllob.jsp

Coroners and Justice Bill

The BMA is extremely concerned by measures to allow unprecedented levels of information sharing. This Bill would strip patients and doctors of any rights in relation to the control of sensitive health information. Despite repeated assurances from the Government that the move towards centralised electronic health records would take full account of the requirement for confidentiality, the Bill explicitly sets it to one side. The BMA is pressing Government for assurance as a matter of urgency that confidential health information will be exempt from this legislation. The BMA's briefing on this issue can be viewed at: www.bma.org.uk/news/lobbying_campaigning/Coronbilllob.jsp

MP-GP practice visit scheme

The Parliamentary Unit continues to implement the MP-GP practice visit scheme. So far, 172 MPs have asked to visit a GP practice in their constituency. To date, 85 practice visits have been confirmed with many more being planned. The Parliamentary Unit is pleased to report that feedback from MPs who have visited a GP practice in their constituency has so far been positive.

The Parliamentary Unit is working closely with LMCs to identify GP practices that are interested in hosting a visit from their MP. Practices interested in the initiative should contact Susan Solanki, Parliamentary Liaison Officer at ssolanki@bma.org.uk

Parliamentary newsletter

In early February 2009, a parliamentary newsletter was sent to all MPs and selected Peers. The newsletter contains information on a wide range of issues including an update on the QOF consultation, the MP-GP practice visit scheme and legislation currently passing through Parliament. The newsletter will shortly be available to view on the can be viewed the BMA website: www.bma.org.uk

Health Select Committee Report into Lord Darzi's Next Stage Review

The Health Select Committee published its final report in January and it shared the BMA's concerns about universal imposition of GP-led health centres. The report supports the view that the Government directive for a GP-led health centre be introduced in every Primary Care Trust regardless of local need was short-sighted. Furthermore, the Committee maintained that GP-led health centres have been introduced without proper pilots or evaluation. The Committee's final report can be viewed at:

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhealth/53/5302.htm

Health Select Committee inquiry into NHS top-ups

Following the publication of Improving access to medicines for NHS patients, a report for the Secretary of State for Health by Professor Mike Richards and the announcement of NICE's consultation on Appraising end of life medicines, the Health Committee launched an inquiry into the purchase of additional drugs by NHS patients ("top-up fees"). The BMA submitted written evidence to the Committee which can be viewed at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhealth/194/194we27.htm

House of Lords EU sub-Committee G inquiry into cross-border healthcare

The BMA submitted written evidence to this inquiry, which is examining the European Commission's proposals into cross border healthcare. The BMA welcomes the principle of greater choice for patients but is concerned that language barriers, continuity of care and other problems are not adequately addressed. Dr. Hamish Meldrum and Professor Vivienne Nathanson appeared as witnesses before the Committee in December. The Committee has indicated that its final report will be published w/c 23rd February.

Parliamentary question in the House of Lords on GP surgeries (Monday 9th February)

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch asked the following question in the House of Lords:

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress they have made in extending the opening hours of general practices.

The BMA briefed a number of Peers ahead of the oral question. To read the transcript, please go to:

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200809/ldhansrd/text/90209-0001.htm#0902091000434

Health questions in the House of Commons (Tuesday 10th February)

MPs asked a wide range of questions on issues at Health Questions on Tuesday 10th February. Issues included GP led health centres, obesity and influenza. To read the transcript, please go to www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090210/debtext/90210-0001.htm#09021037000021

**BMA Parliamentary Unit
February 2009**

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

The BMA Scotland public affairs officers keep in regular contact with key MSPs from all of the political parties.

The BMA provided evidence to Health Committee for its inquiry into adolescent mental health services. We also submitted evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee for the stage 1 consideration of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill.

We recently met with Labour MSPs to discuss a range of issues including the way ahead for Scottish General Practice and plan to meet Liberal Democrat MSPs next week (25 Feb). These private meetings are in advance of the Party Conferences taking place in March.

Currently much of our activity is focused on providing key MSPs with advance briefings for the publication of our discussion document "Scottish General Practice - the way ahead" which we are working on in partnership with the Royal College of GPs.

We are anticipating the publication of the Health Bill in the next week or so which will include the legislation to remove the 'legal loophole' that enables private companies to provide NHS GMS Services. We will be actively supporting this in line with ARM policy.

**Gail Grant
Senior Public Affairs Officer
February 2009**

WELSH ASSEMBLY

AM/MP meetings

Dr Richard Lewis, John Jenkins, Andrew Dearden (Chair of Welsh Council) and David Bailey continue their regular meetings with AMs and MPs about a variety of issues, including the pending Welsh NHS reforms (deadline for consultation responses, 25th February 2009).

Conferences

In December John attended the Socialist Health Conference and a 'Feeding our Futures' Conference, as well as the result and announcement of the new leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats (Kirsty Williams, AM, Brecon and Radnorshire) and the new Lib Dem Assembly spokesperson on Health, Peter Black (South Wales West).

In January Hayley and Lucy (new Research and Policy Officer) attended BMA Cymru's Policy Day re. NHS reforms (BMA Scotland's Chair of GPC, Dr Dean Marshall spoke via TC)

Blog

The Public Affairs team has used BMA Cymru Wales' blog to highlight various issues including the Welsh Assembly Government putting the development of GP practice premises on hold, the positive impact of free prescriptions during the recession, the Welsh Auditor General's report into NHS staff sickness levels, and New Year resolution to the WAG to consult more with doctors.

**BMA Wales
February 2009**

GPC Media Coverage Report – December 2008 & January 2009

This month the main topics in the media regarding GPs have been:

December

Flu: The flu epidemic dominated health news in the run up to Christmas and the press office provided quotes and case studies of GPs inundated with sick patients to the media.

Healthcare Commission report: A misleading footnote picked up during the press conference promoting the Healthcare Commission's *State of Healthcare 2008* report suggested that up to 600 errors occur in primary care every day and this became the focus of the story for many journalists. The press office informed journalists that it was inaccurate, and only a couple of papers – the Mail and Express – still ran with that as their main headline. Press Office also issued a statement giving the BMA response to the whole report.

NHS Choices bulletin board: Ben Bradshaw announced in an interview with the Guardian that the NHS Choices bulletin board would do for the NHS what Tripadvisor did for the travel industry. The GPC response, that it would be nothing more than a meaningless popularity contest, was quoted at length in the Mail, Telegraph, Mirror, Guardian, and BBC online.

BMA mentions in the national and regional media for December

	National	Regional	Total
Print:	13	16	29
Broadcasts:	10	32	42

SUBJECT	National broadcast	National print
084 numbers	4	2
NHS Choices website to rate your GP	2	4
Flu	1	1
Contraceptive pill available without prescription	1	-
Returning to work / Sick & fit notes	1	1
Healthcare Commission report – medical errors	1	3
Kings Fund report – NHS staff to show compassion	-	1
Postcode lottery for cervical cancer jab	-	1
TOTAL	10	13

SUBJECT	Regional media
Social security	13
Rating GPs	10
Dementia	7
Extended hours	3
GP led health centre	3
Phone No	2
Surgeries	2
Sick note	1
Emergency Medicine	1
QOF	1
Dispensing	1
OOHrs	1
Rural	1
Contraception	1
Flu	1
TOTAL	48

Press releases issued:

16/12/08 BMA welcomes consultation on the use of 084 numbers in the NHS

January

Pandemic Flu: GPC and the RCGP held a joint press conference to publicise new guidance on what to do before and during a flu pandemic. The press conference was well attended.

Bridlington GP Access Centre: After being contacted initially by a journalist from the Financial Times the Press Office worked hard to explain the detail of the situation behind the announcement. The story was picked up by The Guardian, the Sun, the Times and the BBC.

GP led health centres: Regional coverage has focussed on the opening of GP-led health centres and has included the BMA viewpoint on polyclinics

Extended hours: Regional press continue to cover how many GP surgeries in their patches are now providing extended hours. Coverage tends to be neutral.

QOF consultation: The GPC response to the Department of Health QOF consultation was the front page lead in Pulse and was covered prominently in other trade papers. Press Office has since facilitated a number of GPC articles on the QOF.

Health Select Committee report on the Next Stage Review: **The report agreed with the BMA position on polyclinics – that they should not have been imposed in every PCT and that the process was rushed so consultation was inadequate.**

Cutting NHS carbon emissions: **A Department of Health report on how the NHS could cut carbon emissions advocated greater use of GP telephone consultations. The BMA quote saying that telephone consultations should be carried out only where clinically appropriate was covered favourably in the Mail and Telegraph as well as in an editorial from Janet Street Porter in the Independent.**

BMA mentions in the national and regional media for January:

	National	Regional	Total
Print:	14	41	55
Broadcasts:	2	2	4

SUBJECT	National broadcast	National print
Extended hours	1	-
Flu crisis	1	6
Choose & Book	-	1
Patients to ring GP / NHS carbon targets	-	1
GP-led health centres / Polyclinics	-	5
Rating GPs online	-	1
TOTAL	2	14

SUBJECT	Regional media
GP led health centre	16
Extended hours	5
IT	4
Practice visit scheme	4
NHS Admin	3
Infectious diseases	3
Pharmacy	2
Obesity	2
Referral	1
Medical education	1
Poison	1
Tobacco	1
TOTAL	43

Press releases issued:

5/1/09 **Patient Experience Survey is misleading and flawed, says BMA**
7/1/09 **GP leaders launch new guidance for GPs on pandemic flu**
13/1/09 **Government must address flaws in its health reforms, says BMA**
13/1/09 **BMA response to consultation on the Quality and Outcomes Framework**
27/1/09 **Doctors still having problems with Choose and Book, BMA research shows**