

Friday 17 July 2009

Issue 1

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GPC meeting

The GPC met on 16th July 2009 and this newsletter provides a summary of the main items discussed.

Negotiations update

Negotiations with NHS Employers for 2010/11 are ongoing. Whilst we continue to discuss a number of issues, GPC negotiators have insisted that the profession be allowed to focus on the flu pandemic. The pandemic does currently dominate the agenda of both sides. The negotiators are working hard to finalise arrangements for the flu SFE. In addition, discussions with NHSE have begun to make arrangements for administration of the flu vaccinations later this year.

A new flu policy group met for the first time this week, bringing together Department of Health policy leads, the NHSE, GPC, the devolved administrations and other key parties. There is a great deal still to work out. GPC negotiators will keep the profession informed as much as they possibly can.

GPC negotiators have spent the last few weeks urging the Department of Health to secure death in service benefits for peripatetic locum GPs during the pandemic. We hope that we are close to a solution, which we expect to be mirrored across the UK.

Department of Health survey of clinical DES update

The Department of Health is undertaking a survey of five practices in each PCT to establish the extent of uptake of the 08/09 clinical DESs. Although GPC was not consulted about this survey, it seems to be a reasonable endeavour which could support the GPC's negotiating position. Practices nationally are therefore advised to cooperate with any requests for information for this survey.

PE7 and PE8 results

This issue has not been forgotten. GPC is pursuing a potential national solution and would encourage practices to continue with local appeals, as previously advised, where appropriate. Please continue to consult the website and the list servers for the most up to date information and guidance.

The Department of Health has recently published the GP patient survey results. **To see the results, please [visit the website](#).**

Pandemic flu indemnity arrangements

A meeting has been held between the GPC, the Medical Defence Union (MDU) and the Medical Protection Society (MPS) to clarify whether GPs working in any primary care role, in their usual place of work or in a position to which they have been transferred, would continue to receive full protection of the above Medical Defence Unions (MDOs) and the MDDUS. The MDOs appreciate that the extra demands on GP services as a result of pandemic flu may impact upon the ability of GPs to carry out work to non-pandemic standards and acknowledge that during the pandemic, GPs may have to provide care to very ill patients in the community who would have been admitted to hospital under normal conditions.

GPs transferred to non-primary care roles will be subject to NHSLA indemnity. In such situations, GPs should be provided with written evidence by their contracting body confirming that they have been commissioned to provide services on its behalf. GPs must also continue to remain members of their ordinary MDO.

It will be the responsibility of the employers of retired GPs to provide them with indemnity cover. It is planned that PCOs will employ retired GPs in roles supporting currently working GPs, and that they will therefore be covered under NHSLA indemnity. For this reason, it is strongly advised that individual GPs do not employ retired GPs themselves, as they will be liable for provision of their indemnity.

The MDOs have provided guidance on their websites confirming the above arrangements:

- [Guidance on the MDU website.](#)
- [Guidance on the MPS website.](#)
- [Guidance on the MDDUS website.](#)

The GPC is seeking a written statement from the DH supporting the imposition of NHSLA indemnity for GPs working outside of primary care settings and for retired GPs employed by PCOs.

Pandemic flu antiviral vouchers

The Department of Health (DH) has started distributing special antiviral vouchers to PCTs which will be used to prescribe the antivirals Tamiflu and Relenza free of charge. The DH is proposing to amend the GMS regulations accordingly, on which the GPC currently is seeking clarification.

'Improving GP services' – GPC guidance

The GPC approved a guidance document for GPs and LMCs concerning the Department of Health's publication '*Primary and community services: Improving GP services*'. This DH document seeks to manage the quality of primary care services commissioned by PCTs from all GP practices, and provides practical advice on how PCTs can do this. The GPC guidance offers practical advice and support to LMCs to ensure they are in the best position to engage their PCTs over these issues, and mitigate any potential threats.

The GPC guidance will be published shortly, and sent to all LMCs.

DWP Consultation: Publication of Formal Consultation on Regulations relating to The New Medical Statement

The process used by general practitioners to document their advice on fitness for work to patients with a health condition and the forms they use have remained largely unchanged since the foundation of the NHS. The DWP is currently consulting on proposed changes to this process. The draft regulations apply to England, Scotland and Wales, and responses are welcome from anyone with an interest. The consultation can be accessed from the link below. The Contracts and Performance subcommittee of the GPC will be coordinating the BMA response. To read the consultation document [please visit the DWP website.](#)

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

This week the GPC sent out CD-ROMs provided to all LMCs regarding Practice Based Commissioning and the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme. The Department of Health has provided this CD-ROM, which contains a number of documents about how the IAPT programme works, as well as a business case for those interested in commissioning the service. The disk contains

useful information about how to use practice based commissioning to maximise the potential benefit of the IAPT programme and strong evidence of the effectiveness of the service in treating people with long term conditions and medically unexplained symptoms, as well as in treating the common mental health conditions of depression and anxiety disorders. The involvement of general practitioners is central to the development of the new services.

The General Practitioners Committee, together with other primary care organisations including the RCGP, signed a consensus statement supporting the drive to improve access to psychological therapies for our patients. This statement reflected the findings of the Joint Scoping Document from the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Psychiatry on psychological therapies. Previously access to such psychological therapies has been limited, and characterised by very long waiting times. In 2007, the Department of Health announced new funding rising to £170m by 2011 to train 3,600 new therapists to provide an improved service.

Please disseminate these CD-ROMs to practices with an interest. For further information please go [to the IAPT website](#) or contact the primary care lead, [Dr Alan Cohen](#).

Somebody Else's Child – Everybody's Responsibility

The British Association for Adoption & Fostering (BAAF) has launched a new campaign which is aimed at health care professionals. The campaign is called Somebody Else's Child and is concerned with private fostering. This is an arrangement for 28 day or more, which is when children are cared for by someone other than a close relative. By law, parents and carers must notify their local authority before entering into these arrangements. But sadly many don't.

There are an estimated 10,000 children living in private fostering arrangements in England and Wales, but last year only just over 1,500 notifications made with local authorities. While most of these children will be safe, others may be at risk of abuse and neglect at the hands of their private foster carers. Without social services intervention, this could go on for years.

Although the legal responsibility lies with the parent and the carer, the campaign is urging anyone who works with children to play their part. If you know of a child living with someone who isn't a direct relative, for 28 days or more then, please don't ignore it. You should either speak to the child's carer, if appropriate, or inform your local social services. Keeping children safe is the responsibility of the whole community.

For more information [visit the campaign website](#).

BMA Employer Advisory Service

The BMA Employer Advisory Service provides practices with free comprehensive, impartial and authoritative advice on a huge range of employer-related matters.

Our team of specially trained and experienced advisers is ready and able to deal with queries on issues such as recruiting and employing staff, contracts and terms and conditions of service,

appraisals and performance management, disciplinary procedures and dismissals. They are also well versed in current employment legislation, discrimination, the development of appropriate HR policies, and how to implement best practice.

Our advisers are not only experts in their field but understand general practice and employer matters relating to doctors:

- employment law
- grievance and disciplinary issues
- managing absence
- recruitment
- appraisal
- discrimination
- HR policies
- best HR practice.

They also have excellent knowledge of local issues and well-established contacts with local and strategic health authorities and primary care trusts.

For free comprehensive, impartial, authoritative advice you can trust call the BMA Employer Advisory Service on 0300 123 123 3 anytime between 8.30am and 6pm (Monday to Friday, except UK-wide bank holidays) and you'll be connected directly to one of our expert advisers. Or you can email your query to support@bma.org.uk.

To access the service at least one partner needs to be a BMA member although we would recommend all doctors are members of the BMA.

LMC conference - update

The 2009 LMC conference elected the following as members of the conference agenda committee for 2009-2010:

Chairman: Mary Church

Deputy Chairman: Michael Ingram

Agenda Committee: Gill Beck, Buckinghamshire
David Grant, Gwent
Stephen Meech, Kent
Guy Watkins, Cambridgeshire

Stuart Blake, Lothian
Hal Maxwell, Ayrshire & Arran
Peter Swinyard, Wiltshire

The dates of next year's conference will be announced in the near future. We will soon write to LMC secretaries for confirmation of the number of GPs their LMC represents so that the agenda committee can determine the number of seats allocated to each LMC.

Media coverage report

Please find attached (appendix 1) a GPC media coverage report prepared by the BMA's press office, detailing GPC media activity during the last few weeks.

GPC news index

The GPC news index for the 2008-2009 session is enclosed (appendix 2).

The GPC next meets on 17 September 2009, and LMCs are invited to submit items for discussion. You may like to review these, beforehand, with the representatives in your area who serve on the GPC. The closing date for items is 8 September 2009. It would be helpful if items could be emailed to Catharina Ohman-Smith at cohman-smith@bma.org.uk. You may also like to use the GPC's listservers to exchange views and ideas.

GPC News

GPC News is available via the Internet, via the BMA's web pages: www.bma.org.uk

LMCs are reminded that their regional representatives can provide more detailed information about the issues covered in GPC News, and other matters. Other members of the GPC would also be pleased to accept invitations to LMC meetings wherever possible. Their names and addresses are in the GPC Yearbook. The secretariat can also provide a written background brief if required, but it would be helpful to have such requests well in advance of your meetings.

Finally, if LMCs require assistance on local issues, they can also contact the BMA's local offices: addresses are on page 3 of the GPC's yearbook.

This newsletter has been sent to:

- Secretaries of LMCs and LMC offices
- Members of the GPC
- Members of the GP trainees subcommittee
- Members of the sessional GPs subcommittee