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## **GPC meeting**

The GPC met on 19 July 2007 and this newsletter provides a summary of the main items discussed.

## **Report on main negotiating issues**

Please find attached (appendix 1) the written report from the GPC negotiators submitted to the committee ahead of the meeting and revised in the light of the updates given at the meeting.

## **Elections at GPC for a new chairman and negotiator**

The GPC voted for a new chairman at the start of the meeting. Six candidates were standing for election and Dr Laurence Buckman was elected chairman of the GPC from 2007-2010.

Laurence Buckman's election to the post of chairman of the GPC left a position open for a new negotiator. Five members of the committee stood for the position and Dr Chaand Nagpaul was elected.

Laurence Buckman named his deputy chairman as Dr Richard Vautrey.

The current negotiating team is now:

Laurence Buckman (Chairman)  
Richard Vautrey (Deputy Chairman)  
Stewart Drage  
Peter Holden  
Chaand Nagpaul

Dean Marshall (Chair of GPC Scotland)  
Brian Dunn (Chair of Northern Ireland GPC)  
David Bailey (Acting Chair of GPC Wales)

Dr Andrew Dearden has stood down as Chairman of GPC Wales.

As is permitted under GPC standing orders, the seat that the chairman occupied on the committee is released for another member from that constituency. As Laurence Buckman is on the GPC through LMC Conference his move to chairman means that Dr Gill Beck is now elected to the GPC through LMC Conference.

The committee voted against any further individual co-options to GPC.

## **Publication of the GP Patient Survey**

The Department of Health expects to release the results of the GP Patient Survey on Tuesday 24 July. The GPC will publish its own press release on the day and will circulate an information sheet on the survey to all LMCs which can then be cascaded to practices for them to use as they wish in communication with their patients.

The national GP Patient Survey results are still subject to strict embargo but the GPC hopes to get some further preparatory information to LMCs later today to help with local press work. LMCs are advised to contact their PCTs as soon as possible to ask for the local survey results.

## **PMS contractors returning to GMS contracts**

Some Local Medical Committees (LMCs) within England are experiencing ongoing problems following PCT decisions to review all PMS contracts in certain areas. This includes PCTs seeking to renegotiate aspects of PMS contracts to extract sums from the baseline and setting new targets and expectations. The GPC has previously produced comprehensive guidance for LMCs on how to approach negotiations with PCTs should this situation occur. This guidance can be accessed here:

[www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/pmscont0406](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/pmscont0406)

PMS contractors, however, also retain the right to return to GMS. In response to iniquitous GMS contracts being offered to PMS contractors when compared to those currently already on GMS contracts, the GPC passed unanimously the following motion:

*"That GPC make an urgent statement that the terms for practices that consider moving from a PMS to GMS contract should be fair and equitable with regard to both contract terms and financial resources."*

Although there is no agreed formal mechanism for determining the financial position of PMS practices who wish to enter into a GMS contract, the GPC supports fully the negotiation of fair and equitable rules for the transfer back to GMS from PMS and, in particular, the entitlement of PMS

practices to the equivalent of an MPIG, as set out in John Hutton's October 2003 letter to PMS practices. The GPC will continue its attempts to negotiate a national agreement for PMS practices returning to GMS, and to support LMCs with their negotiations locally as appropriate.

The GPC has encouraged affected LMCs to stress to PCTs and the local press that mass variation to contracts that could impact on the services that practices provide is likely to destabilise general practice and provision of health care to patients in the local area.

## **Department of Health survey on practice based commissioning**

As set out in the GPC's guidance on practice based commissioning (PBC) for 2007-08, this year, the Department of Health (DH) is taking a new approach to monitoring the development of PBC.

The DH has commissioned Ipsos MORI to design a national survey that will be sent out to a sample of approximately 2,000 practices each quarter. In order that no PCT receives useless data, the sampling will vary between PCTs to ensure that a minimum number of practices are surveyed in each PCT. This will mean that practices in smaller PCTs may be surveyed more frequently, while those in larger PCTs may not be surveyed at all; however it is anticipated that most practices will be surveyed in the year.

The survey for the first quarter was sent to practices in June – a copy of which can be found at appendix 2 – with a deadline of 13 July.

The intention is for all the data collected from practices to be inputted into a spreadsheet to allow individual PCTs and SHAs to look at their feedback from practices. The spreadsheet will include a benchmarking facility to help PCTs put the feedback in context. All information is to be anonymised and no practice will be identifiable from the data. In addition, the DH will publish a report on its website summarising the key findings from the survey results, aggregated at a national level.

We would encourage GPs to complete this survey if/when they receive it as this is a good opportunity for individual practices to have their say on the local implementation of PBC and to give a vote of confidence or no confidence in their PCT.

## **The framework for procuring external support for commissioners**

The BMA issued a briefing and position statement on the framework for procuring external support for commissioners (FESC) in April; the statement was emailed to LMCs and a slightly amended version is attached at appendix 3.

We understand that the FESC has now gone live and that PCTs have been sent details of the private companies who were successful in the national procurement exercise and from which they can buy in a range of support services relating to their commissioning responsibilities. The Department of Health has yet to make this list publicly available however. In addition, a few final details regarding the framework are yet to be confirmed, principally, information on the payment models.

It is anticipated that the Department of Health will be making an official announcement on the FESC shortly.

If your PCT(s) is planning to procure services through the framework, we would be interested to receive details of and your views on the situation; please contact [sal-zaidy@bma.org.uk](mailto:sal-zaidy@bma.org.uk).

## **A rational way forward for the NHS in England: BMA discussion document**

Following detailed discussion on the BMA Council Working Group 'green paper' or discussion document 'A rational way forward for the NHS in England' at the May meeting, members considered a draft GPC critique of the document. Some minor amendments were suggested – including adding as an appendix the resolutions on the paper passed at the Annual Conference of LMCs – and a final version of the critique will be submitted by the deadline of 7 September 2007.

The committee was informed that the Council Working Group would be reconstituted in the new session in order to produce a more defined 'white paper' later in the year.

The discussion document 'A rational way forward for the NHS in England' can be accessed online at the following address: [www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/rationalwayforward](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/rationalwayforward).

## **Modernising Medical Careers**

We are currently working with the BMA's Junior Doctors Committee and directly with COGPED to ensure a smooth process for potential GP trainees. To date we have been assured that there is flexibility with regard to inter-deanery transfers when one GP trainee has been accepted for training in one area and their partner in another. We have also been informed that feedback has been made available to those who were not successful in their application for a GP training placement in round one (for the August 2007 intake), and that an appeals process is available. However, we do have concerns that the timeframe for appeals is too long to provide those applicants with a placement in 2007. We would be interested to hear of any cases which cannot be resolved locally.

The GPC's report on the selection process can be found at [www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/agptrainposts0607](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/agptrainposts0607).

## **Mental Health Act 2007**

The Mental Health Act 2007, revised to introduce new mental health legislation based on amendment of the 1983 Mental Health Act, received Royal Assent on 19 July 2007. The BMA's Parliamentary Unit and the Ethics Department have been working to ensure that the Act promotes the highest clinical and ethical standards of practice. Despite positive changes secured by BMA campaigning, concerns remain over these new mental health laws.

The legislation, which comes into force in November 2008, introduces the wider use of SCTOs (supervised community treatment orders), under which patients can be required to take medication in their own homes. It could also raise the number of people categorised as mentally ill. As a result, it could mean that GPs find themselves increasingly responsible for a greater number of mental health patients.

A government consultation on a code of practice covering implementation of the new legislation is due out in September and the BMA will be fully engaged with the consultation to ensure that this legislation is as ethical as it possibly can be.

The BMA and other organisations campaigned against aspects of the Act such as the possibility those with untreatable personality disorders could be detained, even if nothing medical could be done for them. Although last-minute amendments alleviated a number of doctors' fears, there is still concern that in some cases no psychiatrist would be involved in the care of a patient detained under

the Act and that, in theory, a hospital detention order could be renewed without the recommendation of a medically qualified practitioner.

The amendments ensure that:

- Patients can be held against their will only if treatment is available to alleviate or prevent a deterioration in their condition, or one or more of its symptoms and manifestations
- Patients detained under the Act will have statutory rights of advocacy
- Treatment for children and young people with mental disorders must be given in an environment suitable for their age and geared to meet their needs
- Conditions imposed on patients under SCTOs must relate to their health and nothing else
- Renewal of a hospital detention order must be approved by the patient's responsible clinician as well as another professional involved in the patient's care.

The GPC, together with the Royal College of GPs, is in the process of developing an information pack on how the new law will work and its potential impact on GPs. The GPC is also working with other departments within the BMA to ensure that implementation of the new mental health legislation is as workable and ethical as possible.

## **Occupational Health Conference**

Please see the attached details of a conference entitled "Work, good for your patient's Health and Wellbeing" which will be held at BMA House on Wednesday 5 September. The programme, registration form and delegate invitation letter can all be seen on the BMA's website at: [www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/wellbeing07](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/wellbeing07).

## **LMC conference - update**

The 2007 LMC conference elected the following as members of the conference agenda committee for 2007-08:

Chairman: Fay Wilson

Deputy chairman: Mary Church

Agenda Committee: David Baker  
Gill Beck  
Stuart Blake  
David Grant  
Michael Ingram  
Hal Maxwell  
Guy Watkins

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.

## **LMC secretaries conference - update**

This year's LMC secretaries conference will be held on Thursday 22 November 2007. Further information will be sent out next month.

## **Media coverage report**

Please find attached (appendix 4) 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 2006-2007 session is enclosed (appendix 5).

## **GPC secretariat**

A copy of our staffing structure to reflect staffing changes is attached at appendix 6. We would be grateful if LMCs would direct all enquires to their liaison officer. A copy of the LMC regional structure is also attached at appendix 7.

**The GPC next meets on 20 September 2007, 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 12 September. It would be helpful if items could be emailed to Andrew Young at [ayoung@bma.org.uk](mailto:ayoung@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: <http://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 GP registrars subcommittee
- Members of the sessional GPs subcommittee