

# WORCESTERSHIRE LMC

## NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2006 EDITION

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### SECRETARIES REFLECTIONS

So 2006 is drawing to a close and the New Year beckons. It is always a time to reflect on recent history and think of the future. From the *General Practice* point of view this year doesn't seem to have been particularly successful in Worcestershire. Our former PCTs went into meltdown and our new PCT has not yet found its feet so really nothing much is happening. There is an awful lot of things on the *General Practice* agenda and these really haven't taken off. In some ways it has been a quieter time than normal for the LMC but we have used that time effectively to improve and modernise much of the working of the LMC. Our huge thanks go to Michelle Hallahan, our Executive Officer, who has brought the LMC office into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We have had considerable changes in our financial organisation, particularly with regards to tax and national insurance for members work and the LMC Limited Company plan is well advanced and this should happen early in the New Year. I hope that you find our website helpful and we have just arranged further improvements to make this more user friendly and informative. We are very proud of our website which we feel is one of the better LMC websites in the country. We regularly look at other LMC sites just to see what they are up to!

Nationally relationships between the GPC and the BMA and the DOH are obviously very strained, particularly because a number of announcements by Lord Warner. At the last LMC meeting members were delighted by the news that he has resigned. Nobody is quite clear whether this was a genuine resignation for family reasons or whether he was pushed. Connecting for Health seems to be developing increasing amounts of flack nationally and he was the prime mover for this. Who his replacement will be we do not know and whether the Department of Health's agenda will alter is not yet clear. Certainly it's a new opportunity and something that needs to be grasped firmly. We are awaiting further news on the Pensions issue and the Review Body announcement and the review of the new GP Contract will all be happening in the early part of next year. Connecting for Health is an issue that gives the LMC great concerns. Choose and Book obviously does not work in this county and is a long way away from being fit for purpose. Electronic prescribing does seem a sensible thing and we hope this might be developed soon. The issues around the national spine and confidentiality give us great concern and we have fed

these back to the BMA. There does seem to be movement on the part of Connecting for Health from the Department of Health, we hope this will continue. We are pushing the BMA for definitive guidance for practices, particularly on the issue of the 'opt in or opt out for patients'.

At the last LMC meeting Dr Bryan Smith our new Chairman came to meet members and gave a very honest and forthright review on how he as an outsider sees the current state of healthcare in Worcestershire. His openness and honesty was very gratifying and we do hope this will reflect across the board and allow a much better relationship between the LMC and the new PCT to develop in the New Year. Sadly the PCT has not appointed a Director of Commissioning. The round of interviews did not produce a candidate that met their requirements and this has gone out to national advertising. Whilst we support the desire to get the best person possible we are concerned that Worcestershire PCT is very late entering the market and that this delay in appointment is further adding to the inertia in the system. I can imagine there must be an in-tray somewhere in the PCT full of letters from the LMC on a range of issues that need to be dealt with.

In the coming year the LMC aims to continue to provide what we hope is a good service to practices keeping you up to date with information both locally and nationally, guidance documents and all the other relevant information that we receive. We hope you find our email communications helpful and this newsletter. As we have already said we going to make further improvements to our website. We very much welcome feedback from practices on services that the LMC provides. We hope that you found the meetings that we organised last year helpful and we have some more of those in the pipeline for the coming year.

I would like to take the opportunity to wish everybody in general practice in Worcestershire a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

*Simon*

### **PREMISES**

Shortly before the last LMC meeting we became aware of what looks like becoming a major problem regarding funding for premises. There are a number of major schemes being planned around the county, some at quite an advanced stage of planning. The PCT has indicated that what were understood to be guaranteed funding streams for these developments are now seriously in doubt. It is not clear whether the decision on the funding has been made, either locally by the Strategic Health Authority or nationally. The LMC discussed this in detail with Dr Smith at the last meeting and expressed our real concern at the implications this will have

for practices. Some practices have spent significant amounts of time and money on the projects and this could all be lost. Furthermore if these schemes do not go ahead some of the plots of the land will be used for other purposes making future developments even more difficult. Finally it is clear that a significant number of practices around the county have inadequate surgeries and this will possibly mean a curtailment of services and most definitely will mean that they are not able to take the full advantages of Practice Based Commissioning and Providing. We will keep you posted of the developments but would be very grateful if we could hear from individual practices who are affected by this potential catastrophe.

### **PENSIONS**

We have kept you informed with information that we have received so far from the GPC. At the LMC meeting we discussed this important issue and unanimously felt that this was a breach of confidence, trust and indeed the new GMS contract. It is outrageous that the Department of Health intends to cap pension increases. This will have a tremendous effect on doctors who either just retired or who are planning to retire in the immediate future. It obviously has implications for wider audience in the public sector that fear that similar moves will be made to them. How the Department of Health can argue it didn't know what the new contract was going to achieve is unbelievable. You may recall right at the early stages of the new GMS contract, Dr Simon Frad made statements regarding the planned increase in pensions. Many of us didn't believe those but he was proved right. He ought to know because he was then negotiating the pension changes! The LMC has written a letter of support to Dr Hamish Meldrum agreeing that this is vitally important and supporting the GPC line at this stage. We do feel that this is an important issue and that we should not in any way give way to the Department of Health over this.

The BMA has prepared some explanatory papers including one explaining the reasons for the proposed contribution rate changes. This is an issue which has caused some concerns for GPs. These are available to BMA members on the website at [www.bma.org.uk/pensions](http://www.bma.org.uk/pensions). Members can find feedback of their comments to the pensions department via dedicated email links.

### **PRACTICE BASED COMMISSIONING**

About 70 people attended our meeting in November on Practice Based Commissioning and we hope you found this useful. It is clear that various groupings are coming together around the county and also perhaps that people are beginning to recognise that there are clear differences between practice based commissioning and practice based providing. Many of us feel that practice based commissioning is not looking to be a worthwhile prospect. Certainly the opportunity for small localities to make savings or any real changes is doubtful and it may well be that practice based commissioning county wide forum is the right way forward for us. This will need further discussion. Interestingly the audit commission has

found that almost one in eight payments to trusts under Payments by Results are inaccurate. The study of twelve Acute Trusts in South Yorkshire, Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire found an average error rate of 11.9% in payments because of errors in the coding of diagnosis and procedures. The highest error rate was 28%. That would obviously have huge impact on practice based commissioning if there are similar errors in Worcestershire. One imagines that the error rate is likely to be similar here. However, practice based providing does seem to offer a full range of opportunities for practices and the LMC feels that this is the road to go down. Further guidance documents and information are becoming available and we will be circulating these soon. Practices may find helpful some QMAS data analysis that has been produced for PCTs by the Department of Health Management at Keele University and this is available on our website at:  
<http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/MappingHealthInformationforWMidsPCTs5PL00-QMAS2006.pdf>

### **LATEST GUIDANCE ON OUR WEBSITE IN THE LAST MONTH**

In latest guidance all following items are available on our website:

Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on the NHS summary care record:

<http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/MinisterialTaskforceontheSummaryCareRecord-Dec06.pdf>

PBC - Practical Implementation

<http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/PBCpracticalimplementation28Nov06.pdf>

Practice Based Commissioning: practical implementation - what does this mean for practices - Nov 06

<http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/PBCpracticalimplementationwhatdoesthismeanforpracticesNov06.pdf>

PBC - Practical Implementation - A Wessex LMC briefing paper

<http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/PBCpracticalimplementation-WessesLMC-Dec06.pdf>

List of currently available LES specifications by topic area

<http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/ListofavailableLESspecificationsbytopicarea-December2006.doc>

Patient Experience Survey - Focus on - Oct 06 (Updated Dec 06)

[http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/FocusonPES-October2006-updatedDec06\\_000.pdf](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/FocusonPES-October2006-updatedDec06_000.pdf)

Wessex LMC have allowed us to circulate a very helpful guidance document they have produced regarding Disability Equality Scheme. GPs do have obligations to these patients under their legal and professional duty and are therefore obliged by the GMC duties of care to act in the best interests of patients. Once they are aware of the health consequences of any inequalities they should therefore try and address them as far as practicable. We think this guidance is a helpful reminder for practices.

<http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/DisabilityEqualityDutyWessexLMC.pdf>

The Department of Health has launched a consultation document called "Fit to Lead" which is a review of the PCT Professional Executive Committees. We initially expected definitive guidance but instead we have a consultation paper. GPs like to review this.

Fit to Lead (Main Doc)

[http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/fit\\_to\\_lead.pdf](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/fit_to_lead.pdf)

Fit to Lead (Annexes)

[http://www.wmrlmc.co.uk/ftl/supporting\\_annexes.pdf](http://www.wmrlmc.co.uk/ftl/supporting_annexes.pdf)

The BMA's Professional Fees Committee has produced guidance document on the Completion of Health Reference Forms for prospective registrants with the General Dental Council. This issue has already caused problems for Worcestershire GPs. The guidance is on the website.

<http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/Docs/GuidanceonhealthchecksrequiredbyGDCfinalNOV06.doc>

### **GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL DRAFT GUIDANCE FOR DOCTORS REGARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The GMC has embarked on a consultation process regarding new guidance. GPs can take part in the consultation online at <https://gmc.e-consultation.net/gmcchildren>. Paper copies are available on request (telephone 0207 189 5404 or email [childrensguidance@gmc-uk.org](mailto:childrensguidance@gmc-uk.org)).

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**THIS NEWLETTER IS PRODUCED FROM THE LMC OFFICE AT  
ST STEPHENS SURGERY**

**The next LMC meeting will be 11 January 2007**