

WORCESTERSHIRE LMC

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2007 EDITION

LMC NEWSLETTER

This is a combined newsletter for February and March. We cancelled the last LMC meeting as it was scheduled to take place on the night when we had heavy snow across the county. Because half term followed we moved the LMC meeting until the 22nd February. The March meeting is cancelled and so the next LMC meeting will take place on the 19th April. Those of you in the north of the county will be aware that LMC elections are currently taking place and so the meeting on the 19th will be first meeting of the new Worcestershire LMC. This committee will be hopefully formally commencing business as Worcestershire Local Medical Committee Ltd. The April LMC meeting will become the LMC Annual General Meeting to review the finances of the committee and discuss the levy for the coming year. The LMC will then be adjourned and the work of the LMC will be carried on by the limited company throughout the year. This is purely a paper exercise and has been done to reduce individual liability and ongoing insurance costs for the LMC. The service of the LMC should continue as normal, the only difference will be the stationery!

WORCESTERSHIRE PCT

Matt Gilks, the Interim Director of Commissioning from the PCT attended the last LMC meeting and informed us that short listing and interviewing for three director posts was taking place. These are Commissioning and Regulation, Public Health and Provider Services. They are currently working on the PCT structure and in the interim have developed two boards for commissioning and providing. The PCT will continue with Dr Bill Borastero as Chairman pending the government's review of the structure of PECs.

He informed the LMC that the Local Development Plan was in its final stage of planning and members of the committee expressed dismay that once again there had been no GP involvement in producing the LDP. This has always been a criticism of the previous PCTs that the LMC only ever saw these documents when we asked for them (after the event). Elsewhere the situation is very different. We have conveyed this concern to the PCT.

Mr Gilks gave an update on the issue of funding for new premises and this has been confirmed by a meeting that the officers recently had with Paul Bates. The PCT has agreed that funding will be given to GP developments that are currently in hand, but this will be prioritised. The PCT is in the process of looking at all the schemes

and will be reporting further. However it is clear that funding for further GP premises developments will be seriously limited and the PCT will be scrutinising developments very much more closely than has happened with some recent PFI projects.

The committee asked about the current financial position of the PCT and was informed that this year they will be ending the current financial year with a deficit of between £12m-£14m. If the PCT had not been top sliced they would be breaking even. Next year the PCT is online to break even. As yet it is not known when the top sliced funds will be returned back to Worcestershire.

Paul Bates had previously informed the LMC that the Department of Health has signed a contract with Mercury Healthcare to provide a mobile diagnostics service for the next seven years at a range of sites across the county. The details of how this will work are not yet clarified. A deal has also been done with Nuffield Surgical to provide a range of services. Sites have also been identified around the county for this service. The PCT assured us that this service comes at no additional cost to the Worcestershire health economy and that additional costs are being borne by the Department of Health. The LMC wondered whether this was a good way to spend limited resources particularly where some of these services are in areas that do not appear to be problem ones for our county. However it was clear this issue had been decided much higher up the tree.

COVENTRY PCT PMS DEBARCLE

As you may be aware from the GP press Coventry PCT had written to all their PMS practices asking to terminate their PMS contract in six months. A meeting had been held between the PCT and the LMC and PMS Doctors at the end of which the PCT agreed to remove the notice of termination. The PCT had been very upset that the doctors had gone to the press and insisted that at the end of the meeting a joint press release was put out. This didn't remove the threat to renegotiate the contracts but our LMC noticed that the key issue was that the PCT had been unable to divide GMS and PMS Doctors. It is clear that general practice as we know it is under threat and it is vitally important that in all respects practices stand together, work together and support each other. We should all learn the lesson from this issue with our neighbours in Coventry. The LMC believes we must resist any division amongst local practices.

AVIAN FLU

By now practices should have received a letter from the PCT regarding a proposal that has been agreed by the LMC in discussion with the PCT and the three former PEC Chairs. The LMC Secretary has been attending flu pandemic meetings for over a year and was becoming increasingly unhappy that no progress was being made. A separate meeting was held at which it was agreed to move towards a scheme

whereby practices would work together out of local flu centres, diverting any free staff to work in there and for practices to work at a minimal level during a possible pandemic. A detailed letter has been sent out and we very much hope that all practices in Worcestershire will agree with this. It is very difficult to plan for a possible pandemic when there are so many ifs and buts. However we feel that this proposal represents a realistic way forward and offers the opportunity for us possibly to be able to provide some sort of service during what could be a frightful time. Government guidance on pandemic flu was due out weeks ago and yet again has been delayed! Like everything else the Department of Health has no idea when this is going to appear.

"BALANCED SCORECARDS"

Balanced Scorecards are not what they appear to be. This is an idea that has come from Tower Hamlets in London and has been taken up by our Strategic Health Authority. The matter came to the Regional LMC who has responded to the Strategic Health Authority expressing concern that firstly these documents are not balanced and secondly they are certainly not scorecards. It is a 64 page document which practices would have to complete. The Regional LMC feels that some of the areas within this are out with our contract and some of the scales are not acceptable. The Regional LMC has written directly to the Chief Executive of the Strategic Health Authority expressing our concern. The LMC will be watching this issue with great interest.

IMPLEMENTATION OF VAT ON MEDICAL SERVICES

The LMC has already circulated to practices the detailed guidance that has been received from the BMA and we are sad to report that as expected parliament has approved the implementation of VAT on medical services from the 1st May 2007. Further information is available on the BMA website. If practices have not already done so we would strongly recommend that you seek guidance from a specialist medical accountant on this issue. Although probably not many practices will currently have to register it is likely that this will gradually come to include more and more practices as time goes by.

FORMULA REVIEW GROUP

The Formula Review Group has produced a document looking at the global sum formula which is published for consultation. GPs are encouraged to read the review and respond to it. The deadline for responses is Friday, 11th May 2007. The links are as follows:

www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Forumlaconsultation?OpenDocument&Login

www.nhsemployers.org/primary/primary-891.cfm

This review was promised when nGMS was introduced. It is vitally important that practices consider these proposals and respond. The LMC will be discussing this at our next meeting.

USE OF NON GEOGRAPHICAL (084) TELEPHONE NUMBERS TO CONTACT NHS SERVICES

A letter was sent from Lord Warner to PCT Chief Executives on the 19th December detailing the governments plan for the use of telephone numbers in primary care. This letter indicates that PCTs should consider moving practices away from using 084 numbers. The GPC was not consulted on this issue and is concerned on the content of the letter. The issue was raised with NHS employers and their response was that "the timing for introducing these improved arrangements for patients into individual practices is a matter to be decided between individual practices and their PCTs and bearing in mind any existing proposals for switching or a previous decision that has already led to a switch. There is no requirement to switch over." (This is a direct quote from Barbara Hakin's response)

DLA REPORTS FEE RISE

The Department for Works and Pensions has agreed to an increase in feeds paid to GPs for the completion of factual reports for disability living allowance and attendance allowance. The new fee of £33.50 will be effective from 1 January 2007.

DIVIDEND INCOME PENSIONABLE IN THE NHS PENSION SCHEME

The GPC has recently found out that, as more and more GP practices were becoming limited companies, the Department of Health has decided, with effect from April 2006 that any NHS profits that are 'drawn down' as dividends would be pensionable (previously this was not the case). There seems to have been a bit of a communication breakdown as the Pensions Agency was only informed of this by the Department of Health recently. This decision may have far-reaching implications for GPs who may have wished to change the status of their practice to a limited company but who have not done so because of the presumed non-pensionability of their dividends. The GPC is still awaiting the precise details and facts of the situation and will issue guidance to the professions once these are known.

HMRC GUIDANCE ON RECORDING EMPLOYERS' PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS ON SELF-ASSESSMENT TAX RETURNS

HMRC would like all GPs and their accountants to be aware of the following when filling out their self-assessment tax returns.

The HMRC's view of the correct accounting and tax treatment for GP contributions is that returns should be submitted stating gross income, including employers' pension contributions. The 14% employers' contribution should also be stated separately so that it can be claimed against tax. Doing tax returns in this way will ensure uniformity across the country but will make no difference to GPs' tax burden if they were previously recording their income net of the employers

contributions. In instances where another method has already been used for the 05-06 accounts, HMRC would ask that the self-assessment forms are resubmitted in the correct format. Guidance can be found on the HMRC's website at:

www.hmrc.gov.uk/pensionschemes/esca9.htm#2

NHS MICROSOFT DEAL

As you know the NHS subscribes to the Microsoft Home Use Programme. This means that any GP and other NHS personnel (including receptionists, managers, secretaries etc) can get a copy of Microsoft Office for use at home for the cost of the media and p&p for £17.31. The new Office 2007 has just been added to this deal (the 2003 version is still available). The way of ordering this is via a website: <http://www.microsoft.com/uk/nhs/>. The only requirement is for an NHS email address.

NEW LOOK WORCESTERSHIRE LMC WEBSITE

We have changed a few of the facilities on the LMC website. It won't affect you greatly apart from hopefully making it a little easier to find the documents you are looking for. You will notice under the download section that there is a log in facility. This is for LMC members only at this time. We have added a new calendar which will have the facility of a map search where the post code is indicated. The main changes are on the download section. There is a new search facility at the top of the download section to make life a little easier when looking for a particular document and under each heading you will be able to sort by document name or date. Instead of being in the left hand margin the last three months documents will automatically be put in a separate heading at the bottom of the download section which will make it a little tidier. We hope you find the website a little easier to navigate but any comments you have are always appreciated.

LATEST GUIDANCE ON OUR WEBSITE IN THE LAST MONTH

The latest guidance is available on our website:

GPC Guidance - Focus on QOF Payments - contains the information on QOF payments which can be found in the Statement of Financial Entitlements. It aims to be a more user friendly text than the SFE.

http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/FOCUS_ON_QOF_PAYMENTS_-_Feb_07.doc

GPC Guidance - Focus on QMAS - a revised version of the original Focus on QMAS bringing it up to date in terms of dates, the IT institutions involved and links to the relevant devolved nations QMAS systems.

http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/FOCUS_ON_QMAS_-_FINAL_-_Feb_07.doc

GPC Guidance - Focus on Read Codes 2006-07 - deals with some of the outstanding read code issues that still exist with the current version.

[http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Focus_on_Read_Codes - QOF 2006-07 \(final\) Feb 07.pdf](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Focus_on_Read_Codes_-_QOF_2006-07_(final)_Feb_07.pdf)

GPC Guidance - Prescribing and the primary and secondary care interface.

[http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Prescribing_guidance -
_primary_secondary_care_interface - FINAL Feb 071.doc](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Prescribing_guidance_-_primary_secondary_care_interface_-_FINAL_Feb_071.doc)

Appendix 1 :-

[http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Prescribing_Guidance - APPENDIX 1 -
_EL\(91\)127 - Feb 07.doc](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Prescribing_Guidance_-_APPENDIX_1_-_EL(91)127_-_Feb_07.doc)

Appendix 2 :-

[http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Prescribing_Guidance - APPENDIX 2 -
_Traffic_Light_System_summary_draft_Feb_071.doc](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Prescribing_Guidance_-_APPENDIX_2_-_Traffic_Light_System_summary_draft_Feb_071.doc)

Appendix 3 :-

[http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Prescribing_Guidance - APPENDIX 3 -
_Final_Service_outline_shared_prescribing_LES_Feb_071.doc](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Prescribing_Guidance_-_APPENDIX_3_-_Final_Service_outline_shared_prescribing_LES_Feb_071.doc)

GPC Guidance - Primary Medical Contracts -Who can hold what?

[http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Primary_medical_contracts -
_Who_can_hold_what - Feb 2007.pdf](http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Primary_medical_contracts_-_Who_can_hold_what_-_Feb_2007.pdf)

Trust, Assurance and Safety - The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century (Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Health)

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/14/31/43/04143143.pdf>

Issue of Med 3 and Med 5 forms

http://www.worcslmc.co.uk/upload/Issue_of_Med_3_and_Med_5_forms.doc

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

The next LMC meeting will be 19 April 2007