

CLMC Bulletin 530 – 24/01/2023

Backing the independent contractor model

Recent weeks have seen the huge stresses on the health service appearing front and centre in the media and on political agendas, with politicians from across the spectrum having their say on how they would alleviate the current unsustainable pressures we and our patients are facing.

Disappointingly the Labour Party and its shadow health secretary Wes Streeting have come out with a number of pronouncements on how it would, if in power, overhaul general practice, firstly by phasing out the independent contractor model, replacing it wholesale with a salaried service.

As you know, GPC England is wholeheartedly in support of the independent contractor model, which, when supported properly, is value for money and invaluable for continuity of care. As GPC England acting chair Kieran Sharrock said in his [response to Mr Streeting's comments](#), we are not completely averse to change and are already looking ahead to what contract will replace the current five-year framework that ends in 2024, but this should not be about 'reinventing the wheel'. We need a contract that supports general practice in all its variety, and for the government of the day to invest appropriately.

Meanwhile, we [raised concerns](#) at plans mooted by Labour leader Sir Kier Starmer to allow more direct-to-specialist referrals, outlining how it could in fact be counter-productive, creating higher demand on services, and worsening delays for secondary care.

Clearly, instead of blaming GPs for problems with the health service – the opposition should be setting its sights on the Government that has overseen a haemorrhaging of GPs over the last decade.

We are due to sit down and discuss all of this with Mr Streeting soon, to ensure that he understands the pressures on the frontline and how these can realistically be alleviated for the benefit of both staff and patients.

Junior doctors' ballot on strike action – guidance and webinar for GP trainees

The ballot on [strike action for junior doctors in England is open](#), and this includes our GP trainee colleagues as an important group of the junior doctor workforce. They are acting as a result of the significant pay erosion they have experienced over the past decade. This situation is made worse by the government also failing to address the undervaluation of the GP Flexible Pay Premia, despite making commitments to do so back in 2019.

Two webinars have been arranged to provide tailored advice specifically for GP trainees over the next few weeks at the following dates:

Saturday 11 February, 10-11am

Monday 13 February, 6-7pm

We welcome all GP trainees to click [here](#) to register your attendance for either date.

You can also download the latest GP trainee materials to share with colleagues on the [BMA website](#). Further guidance for practices and LMCs to support GP trainees will be shared in the coming weeks.

Update on the Digital Firearms Flag

The digital firearms flag will soon be relaunched on SystmOne (TPP) and EMIS Web (EMIS) systems, and is scheduled for deployment on Cegedim/Vision systems in March 2023. We anticipate the relaunch to take place towards the end of January. The digital marker and flag have been tested and brought before the Joint GP IT Committee since being taken down in July 2022. GPs should add the appropriate Snomed code to a patient's record when they receive notification of a firearms certificate application or when a certificate is granted, and this will automatically add a marker to the patient's record. If a potentially relevant condition of

concern is added to their medical record during the application process or after a certificate has been issued, an alert will pop up.

Further information will be announced in due course via the BMA and NHS Digital.

Health Education England education contract

We have had some queries regarding the HEE (Health Education England) education contract that some practices have been asked to sign. Following discussions with HEE we continue to advise that practices do not need to sign this contract if they are not happy to do so. The contract was introduced in some locations to formalise the payment mechanism for practices to be paid for training and supervision, however the contract was not general practice specific and included much which applied to hospitals.

We will now be working with HEE and NHS England towards a more suitable contract for general practices and will update you when there are any developments.

Communication between DWP and GP practices

To support the NHS move away from use of fax as a method of communication and in response to the removal of fax machines from GP surgeries, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been working with Centre for Health and Disability Assessments (CHDA), to respond to this change.

From 30 January 2023 CHDA will be using email in place of existing fax processes for some communications with GP surgeries across England, Scotland and Wales. The email from CHDA will be in the format firstname.lastname@chda.dwp.gov.uk or location.furtherevidence@chda.dwp.gov.uk. GPs should reply to the indicated location.furtherevidence@chda.dwp.gov.uk email address.

DWP has confirmed that this process meets information governance standards and is covered by existing data sharing agreements. Please note, as per the current arrangement, for all urgent information CHDA will call the GP surgery by telephone. For further information, please contact hdas.digitalchange@dwp.gov.uk

LMC Secretaries Conference - Thursday 9 March 2023 - BMA House, London

The LMC Secretaries Conference 2023 will be held at BMA House in London on 9 March. This is the one day in the calendar where LMC Officers from across the UK can come together to learn, inspire, and share. There is GPDF funding for one representative from each LMC to attend and have their travel costs reimbursed. Whilst we would like to extend the invitation to another observer from your LMC who may stand to gain considerably from listening to the day and its training, your LMC will need to cover such costs. An online application form for nominations is available [here](#) (please indicate if it is a first or second place nomination) – you will receive confirmation after the closing date of 22 February 2023. Contact the GPC office at info.lmcconference@bma.org.uk with any queries about the Conference or John Canning, doo@gpdf.org.uk, about travel and subsistence.

GPC upcoming regional elections

Please be advised that nominations are opening **on Wednesday 1 February 2023** for seats to the GPC in some regions. These seats are for a three-year term, 2023-26 sessions, subject to GPC structure review which is currently ongoing which may impact the seat to which successful candidates are elected. **You must be a BMA member to stand in this election.** More information will follow shortly. If you have any queries regarding the election process, please contact elections@bma.org.uk.

Wellbeing

As we continue to face overwhelming pressures in general practice, we encourage practices to focus on their own team's wellbeing.

A range of wellbeing and support services are available to doctors, from our 24/7 confidential [counselling and peer support services](#) to networking groups and wellbeing hubs with peers, as well as the [NHS practitioner health service](#) and non-medical support services such as [Samaritans](#).

The organisation [Doctors in Distress](#) also provides mental health support for health workers in the UK, providing confidential peer support group sessions.

See our [poster with 10 tips to help maintain and support the wellbeing](#) of you and your colleagues.

Please visit the BMA's dedicated [wellbeing support services page](#) for further information.

GPC England committee pages and guidance for practices

- Read more about the work of the [Committee](#)
- Read practical guidance for [GP practices](#)
- See the latest update on Twitter: [@BMA_GP / Twitter @TheBMA / Twitter](#)
- Read about BMA in the media: [BMA media centre | British Medical Association](#)
- Contact us: info.GPC@bma.org.uk
- Read the last GP bulletin: [Backing the independent contractor model | juniors strike: advice for GP trainees | update on the digital firearms flag](#)
- Read the latest [Sessional GPs newsletter](#)