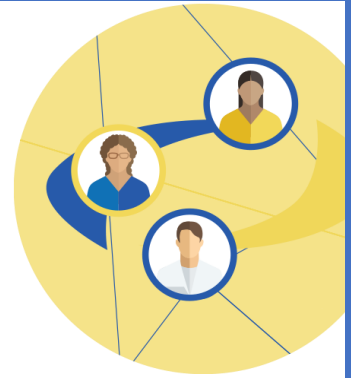


Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire LMC Ltd: Weekly Update for Practices, Monday 23rd January 2023



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1. **Backing the independent contractor model**

We have recently 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 several 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.

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. GPC England acting chair, Dr 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, the GPC also [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. GPC England are due to 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.

2. **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 because 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 11th February, 10-11am
- Monday 13th February, 6-7pm

All GP trainees are encouraged 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.

3. 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. It is anticipated that the relaunch will 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.

We understand that further information will be announced in due course via the BMA and NHS Digital.

4. Health Education England education contract

GPC have had some queries regarding the HEE (Health Education England) education contract that some practices have been asked to sign. Following discussions with HEE they 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.

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

5. 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 the 30th 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

6. 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 the BMA's 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.

Here is the BMA's [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.

Alternatively, please remember that our pastoral support team is only a phone call away to provide confidential support for both personal and professional difficulties. To access the team please ring **01438 880010** and if you believe a colleague may be suffering, please remind them of the service too (click [here](#) for more information on the service).

7. National HIV Testing Week – February 2023

National HIV Testing Week is a campaign to promote regular HIV testing among the most-affected population groups in England. Regular HIV testing helps to reduce the number of people living with undiagnosed HIV and those diagnosed late.

Please see the [latest campaign](#) information for HIV testing week that will support any local activities.

News - For the latest news, information and weekly updates for practices, please visit the [Hot Topics](#) section of our website.

BHLMC Job Board - Advertise your practice vacancies or search for jobs on our [Job Board](#). If you are interested in posting an advert please contact lmadmin@bhlmc.co.uk for more information.

Locums - If you are a Locum and would like to receive LMC updates, please register via the [online form](#) to be added to our database and mailing list.

Workforce Wellbeing & Support - [Visit our webpage](#).

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