

Concessionary Travel Gold Card

The LMC's attention has been drawn to the fact that, with the recent changes to the Gold Card system, patients are approaching their GPs in support of their applications and re-applications for the cards. We have written to the City Council to remind them that GPs have no contractual obligation to provide such support and many will not wish to do so. We note that some GPs may be prepared to provide support at a charge to the patient but the leaflet does not explain this to patients, thus setting up conflict between patients and doctors.

The Council has been advised that they may wish to consider offering a fee to GPs to encourage them to undertake such work through the Collaborative Arrangements, which are now negotiated at local level. It has also been pointed out that GPs could be left out of this procedure entirely in line with the Cabinet Office Regulatory Impact Units' report on GP paperwork ("Making a Difference"). Most people who do not have arms or who have long term loss of the use of both arms are obviously disabled, even to the untrained eye, and should not need a confirmatory statement to prove the obvious. Nowadays all people with a learning disability should be known to Adult or Children's Services Departments and should have an appointed advocate. In cases of doubt the Council could retain a doctor or other health professional to interview and if necessary, examine the applicant. If this person was unable to come to a decision and needed further information it is likely that GPs would respond on a professional to professional basis on payment of an appropriate fee.

Named consultants

The LMC is pleased to note that the Sherwood Forest Hospitals Trust is offering the Named Consultant option through Choose & Book.

Derby Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust have recently introduced paediatric named consultants and have a plan to launch orthopaedic named consultants.

Extended hours – latest

You will have seen the various letters from Laurence Buckman and the LMC regarding the crisis over the GP contract and, particularly the Government's determination to see practices open outside their contracted hours. The Government is not prepared to invest extra money in this extended hours service but is prepared to remove money from other parts of the contract (particularly the Quality and Outcomes Framework) in order to achieve its ends. Negotiations are continuing, for the time being, and it is possible that a negotiated settlement may yet be reached. If this does not happen, money will be withdrawn from the contract and given to PCTs to fund the extended hours that the Government is so desperate to see.

The LMC intends to initiate discussions with the PCTs in Derbyshire to see how they would approach such an outcome but, in the meantime, I would reiterate my advice (given in the September newsletter) that practices should survey their patients to see what they would like in the way of extended hours, bearing in mind that this would inevitably lead to reduced availability of individual doctors during the times that patients are used to.

The LMC will continue to update practices electronically as news is received. Our emails are sent to practice managers; please let us know if you would like us to use an alternative or additional contact email.

Partnership agreements

The BMA has launched a Partnership Drafting Service. The service is offered at a competitive fixed rate to BMA members. Practices will be asked to complete an initial questionnaire from which a first draft of an agreement will be prepared. The practice then will have an opportunity to discuss and comment on that draft before a final draft document is prepared.

In order to use the Service, it is a legal regulatory requirement that at least one practice member (preferably the first point of contact), is a BMA member.

The service is provided by Neal Hooper, a BMA lawyer, who can be contacted on 020 7383 6128 or email info.pds@bma.org.uk

LMC Position Statement on Choose & Book

Derbyshire LMC recognises that the use of the Choose & Book system brings advantages for very many patients and has some advantages, in terms of information management and tracking of patients' journeys, for GPs. The LMC believes, therefore, that in time the vast majority of GPs will wish to use it for the vast majority of referrals.

The LMC is, however, clear that at present (December 2007) Choose & Book has not yet reached a stage in its development and utilisation that would enable it to be regarded as fit for purpose. There remain far too many occasions on which the software simply fails to function, either at practice level or above practice level. The multiplicity of forms of the directories of service development by the providers is confusing. The choice element is important for patients and should include choice of consultant, as well as choice of provider and time of appointment; most providers do not routinely offer this.

Even when Choose & Book is accepted as the standard method of making referrals to other providers there will have to be back-up mechanisms to take account of technical failures, including disasters such as the fire in a Post Office tunnel in Manchester three years ago which left the whole of Buxton without electronic communication for a week. If such back-up mechanisms are in place it may well be reasonable for GPs to use them on those occasions when they and their patient judge that Choose & Book is inappropriate – this would provide background low level testing of the back-up systems.

The LMC is committed to working with the PCTs and providers to overcome the barriers to the use of Choose & Book but cannot support any strategy that would put patient safety at risk by rejecting or delaying referrals that contain adequate clinical information, no matter in what format they are made.

The LMC notes that there is nothing in the GMS contract, nor in most current PMS contracts, that requires practices to use Choose & Book. At this time, when several PCTs nationally are threatening to use remedial and even termination notices to force through changes to primary care delivery, the LMC has serious concerns that the concept is at risk that a contract freely entered into by two willing parties is binding upon both parties. The LMC is therefore encouraging constituents to look not only at what the contract requires them to do but also at what it does not require them to do.

IM&T plans

As part of the NHS Operating Framework for 2008/09 there is separate guidance on the preparation of local IM&T plans. SHAs and PCTs are now responsible for the delivery of the National Programme for IT under the NLOP (National Local Ownership Programme) process.

The guidance is available at

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_081102

Locum GP Available

- MRCGP
- Sheffield VTS trained
- Bassetlaw PCT Performers List

Availability & Rates:

- Full time Monday, Wednesday & Friday (Maternity locums considered)
- Rates as per Sheffield Locum Group

Contact

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Latest advice

In the past month GPC has issued advice on the following topic :

Improving communication, the exchange of information and patient care

Further details are available on application to the LMC office or on the BMA website
www.bma.org.uk

RCGP has issued the RCGP roadmap – the future of general practice.

How to contact us

Derby & Derbyshire LMC Ltd office is at Norman House, Friar Gate, Derby DE1 1NU. Our telephone number is 01332 210008, fax 01332 341771. Our email address is now office@derbyshirelmc.co.uk. The two Practice/PCT Liaison Officers are Melanie Beatham and Kate Lawrence who will continue to liaise with the same North and Southern practices as before the PCT reorganisation. Their email addresses are:
melanie.beatham@derbyshirelmc.co.uk
and kate.lawrence@derbyshirelmc.co.uk.