



**'REPRESENTING AND
SUPPORTING GPs'**

**A GUIDE TO YOUR
LOCAL MEDICAL COMMITTEE**

WHAT ARE LMCS?

Recognised by successive NHS Acts, Local Medical Committees (LMCs) are independent, self-financing bodies with statutory functions to represent the interests of general practice alone and act as its advocate.

LMCs are the professional organisation with responsibility for representing individual GPs, and are not Trade Unions. The 1999 NHS Act extended the role of LMCs to include representation of all GPs, whatever their contractual status.

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SHEFFIELD LMC: WHAT WE DO FOR SHEFFIELD GPs

Representation

We represent:

- principal and salaried doctors working in General Medical Services (GMS), Personal Medical Services (PMS) and Alternative Provider Medical Services (APMS) Sheffield GP practices;
- sessional GPs working regular sessions (equating to an average of one session a week over a twelve month period) in Sheffield GP practices, or who contribute to the LMC's statutory levy;
- trainee GPs throughout their training, rather than just during general practice rotations (we do not seek a contribution to the LMC's levy from GP trainees).

Being represented by the LMC allows GPs and their practices to utilise the knowledge and experience of the LMC, as well as receiving a variety of communications (see *Dissemination of Information Relevant to General Practice* overleaf). We are unable to offer assistance to unrepresented GPs.

We represent the views of represented GPs to Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS England – North (Yorkshire and the Humber), and to any other appropriate organisations or agencies.

We work with many organisations to ensure patients receive services and care in accordance with the profession's local and national priorities. This can mean the LMC robustly defending the profession's views when those of others conflict with what GPs believe is in their patients' best interests. We also defend the right of GPs to refuse non-contractual work, and will negotiate an alternative solution when other organisations wish to impose work on practices.

Our aim is to represent and support GPs, ensuring that they are valued and their skills are properly utilised, and to facilitate the smooth running of general practice. We are committed to the values of equity, fairness, openness and equal opportunities.

We are keen to ensure that we are as inclusive as possible of all GPs, regardless of their contractual status, working arrangements etc. To this end, any comments or suggestions regarding the LMC's representation of GPs would be welcome via email to manager@sheffieldlmc.org.uk.

Helping Individual GPs/Practices

As an independent body with no political constraints, we can act as an advocate and can offer help on all matters relevant to general practice. GPs are welcome to contact us for help and advice to assist steering through the NHS, and the following list, while not exhaustive, highlights some of the areas in which we can offer advice, negotiate, mediate etc:

- Disputes between GPs and other bodies, eg schools, councils, private employers etc;
- NHS regulations/legislation;
- GP contracts, terms and conditions of service and remuneration;
- Completion of medical reports/certification;
- Partnership affairs;
- Prescribing queries;
- Premises/estates issues;
- Occupational health issues, eg sick doctors;
- The NHS complaints process and disciplinary procedures;
- Workforce planning;
- Education and training – undergraduate, postgraduate and vocational training, continuing professional development;
- Professionally led regulation and professional standards – ethical, conduct and performance, including clinical governance.

If you are in any doubt as to whether or not we can assist with a particular issue, please contact us (see *Contact Details* at the end of this guide). We will offer you assistance or direct you to a more appropriate source if the issue falls outside of our remit.

Please note that Sheffield LMC cannot provide individual legal or financial advice but provides representation, guidance and support for GPs and practices in Sheffield. We will not accept liability for use made of our services in circumstances in which individuals or practices ought also to have obtained appropriate legal and or financial advice but have not sought to do so.

Dissemination of Information Relevant to General Practice

We regard communication with constituent GPs as essential. We hope that through utilising many different forms of communication we are able to help GPs to prioritise the information and keep abreast of the main issues impacting on general practice. Our communications take many forms depending on the information they are designed to convey, such as:

- Newsletters: Distributed monthly to all represented GPs and Practice Managers, which include information about important national guidance, local developments etc.
- Newsflashes: Informing all GPs and Practice Managers of essential urgent information. These communications will only ever be very brief, and may highlight further action or reading required by the recipient.
- Emails: Sent to all GPs and Practice Managers or specific groups, eg according to contractual type or locality. These tend to include information specific to the target group that cannot wait for the next newsletter, or that is only relevant to certain people so would be unhelpful to be included in a citywide communication.
- Guidance: Following the completion of negotiations on a particular subject, citywide guidance is produced detailing the outcomes.
- Reports: These are issued when a significant event has taken place, such as the Annual Conference of LMCs and dissemination of the Annual Accounts, which warrant more detailed communications than those outlined above.

- **LMC website:** www.sheffield-lmc.org.uk - Home to all our current guidance, reports and includes an archive of our newsletters. In addition, it also provides links to useful guidance produced by other organisations.
- **Citywide Meetings:** When issues demand broad debate, or if there is a lot of information to be conveyed, we organise meetings on a citywide basis and invite speakers from relevant organisations.
- **Vacancy Bulletins:** These are distributed electronically to all GPs and Practice Managers, and to practice nurses via the Practice Nurse Forum.

We are always looking to improve our communication with constituents. To this end, we would welcome any comments or suggestions via email to manager@sheffieldlmc.org.uk.

Local Negotiations

We have an extensive network of contacts, through a combination of regular meetings or ad hoc meetings when particular issues of mutual interest or concern arise. These contacts include the following organisations:

- Academic Unit of Primary Medical Care;
- British Medical Association (BMA) Industrial Relations Officer;
- Health Education England Yorkshire and Humber;
- Healthwatch Sheffield;
- Local Government/MPs;
- Local LMCs via the South Yorkshire & Bassetlaw LMCs Liaison Group;
- NHS England – North (Yorkshire and the Humber);
- Primary Care Sheffield;
- Primary Care Support England;
- Sheffield City Council;
- Sheffield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG);
- Sheffield GP Collaborative;
- Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust;
- Sheffield Local Pharmaceutical Committee;
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

National Negotiations

The General Practitioners Committee (GPC) is the ‘parliament’ for GPs. It is a standing committee of the BMA, with authority to deal with matters affecting NHS GPs, whether or not they are BMA members. Every part of the country has at least one spokesperson on the GPC to present its views and debate key issues. Throughout the year papers are produced for discussion at LMCs and, from time to time, the GPC consults all GPs directly through surveys and questionnaires. We help to disseminate this information and will often encourage participation in GPC consultations, as these are conducted for the benefit of the profession.

GPC representatives and LMC representatives meet at the Annual Conference of LMCs. Proposals from individual LMCs across the country are debated alongside those from the GPC. The outcome of the debate determines the framework for the profession’s negotiations at both national and local levels.

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SHEFFIELD LMC: HOW WE WORK

Elections

The Committee at the heart of Sheffield LMC consists of up to 24 GPs elected on a citywide basis. Elections take place every 4 years according to the approved constitution. Any GP contributing to the LMC's levies and on the Medical Performers List can be nominated for election.

Our constitution allows for the election of doctors working under a variety of contractual arrangements and for the co-option of doctors offering expertise not represented elsewhere on the committee, such as representatives from secondary care, public health and GP trainees. This encourages open and lively discussion and allows the LMC to be representative of differing opinions.

The committee meets on a monthly basis to discuss the outcomes of other meetings attended by members that month, decide on policy, debate hot topics, and to agree an LMC stance on pertinent issues. It also offers an opportunity for members to highlight any areas of concern they may have, and to establish how widespread a problem may be and, therefore, if the LMC should take further action. Speakers are also invited to attend these meetings to present ideas to the committee, which allows for the opinions of 'grassroots' GPs to be included in any proposals.

Any GP interested in being co-opted to a vacancy or wishing to be involved with the LMC in some capacity can register this interest and obtain more information by emailing the LMC Manager via manager@sheffieldlmc.org.uk.

LMC Executive and Secretariat

The Executive is elected by the committee to the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Executive Officer(s).

The Secretariat has been based at the offices on Wostenholm Road since December 1994 and comprises of a full time Manager, a full time Administrator and a part time Administrative Assistant.

The Executive and Secretariat attend meetings, negotiate with other organisations, respond to practice queries and produce the guidance, reports, newsletters etc referred to above. Advice is taken from the full committee to guide discussions and the results of meetings are fed back to the committee. As the Executive are practising GPs, the Secretariat are the first point of contact, ensuring that the workload is appropriately prioritised and dealt with or allocated according to job descriptions, expertise, urgency etc.

Any represented GP or Practice Manager who would like to visit the LMC office to meet the staff and learn more about our work would be very welcome to do so. Please email the LMC Manager via manager@sheffieldlmc.org.uk to arrange a convenient date/time.

Funding

We are funded by statutory contributions from Sheffield GP practices and by practitioners registered with the LMC as sessional GPs. This is the primary source of income for the LMC and is used to pay for office space, Secretariat and Executive salaries, citywide meetings etc.

In addition, practices are asked to contribute to a voluntary levy, which is used to finance the LMC's contribution to the national General Practitioners Defence Fund (GPDF). The purpose of the GPDF is to fund the activities of the General Practitioners Committee (GPC), its negotiating team, subcommittees and the Annual Conference of LMCs, in addition to campaigns and legal actions in defence of NHS GPs.

An Accountable Finance Officer (AFO) is elected from within the LMC Executive. The AFO produces an annual report of the accounts, detailing the income and expenditure for each financial year, and highlighting any points of interest or unusual spend. The accounts and report are circulated to all represented GPs and comments are welcomed.

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SHEFFIELD LMC: CONTACT DETAILS

LMC Executive

Information about the current LMC Executive Officers and their contact details can be found at:

<http://www.sheffield-lmc.org.uk/page1.aspx?p=13&t=1>

LMC Secretariat

Information about the current LMC Secretariat and their contact details, as well as LMC office opening times and location can be found at:

<http://www.sheffield-lmc.org.uk/page1.aspx?p=13&t=2>

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