



Consortium of Local Medical Committees

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15th September 2020

Letter to all Practices and GPs

LMC Response to the Communication of 14th Sept from Nikita Kanani and Ed Waller and associated Toolkit

Dear Colleagues,

Many of you will have been appalled to see the letter and attached toolkit that has been sent to you yesterday which, on the face of it, seems to be encouraging patients to demand face to face appointments. That's certainly how the media have responded and given an unfair and damaging image of how general practice is performing in this unprecedented crisis.

You will remember that we sent a letter to you setting out the LMC position when the NHSE letter of 31st July on the Third Phase of NHS Response to COVID-19 was published. Our position has not altered since then and for ease of reference I repeat below what we said at the time.

"The language in the letter can also be interpreted as exerting pressure to return to "normal working." We know this is not going to be possible and you will have to continue using clinical judgement to address the most pressing and priority needs of your patients. The LMC will support you wholeheartedly in following this line and will resist any measures to pressurise you into doing more than is possible. We have a good working relationship and understanding with CCG and NHSE colleagues and will continue to work with them to sustain this message."

All GP practices must offer face to face appointments at their surgeries as well as continuing to use remote triage and video, online and telephone consultation wherever appropriate

We as an LMC interpret this, and will support practices accordingly, as offering face to face appointments where clinically necessary. Remote triage / consultation should remain the norm to protect patients and staff from the risk of infection.

When it is clinically appropriate for a patient to attend the practice for a face to face consultation the LMC will support practices following a "no mask - no see" policy. Face coverings are intended to protect clinicians and staff from potential COVID-19 infection. There is no evidence that wearing a face covering can cause physical harm to patients, even those with respiratory or cardiovascular disease.

Practices should educate patients regarding the importance of wearing a face covering and should protect their staff from patients who do not wear them. Staff, including clinicians, are at risk of infection if they are within two meters of a person not wearing a face covering. Additionally, it keeps other patients attending the practice safe (including vulnerable and shielding patients).

We will be working through the Primary Care Cell across Lancashire and South Cumbria and with colleagues in North Cumbria to keep a tight rein on the situation. We are also active in each ICP area addressing interface issues between secondary and primary care. At a national level our GPC leaders have taken this up in the most robust manner with NHSE. ([See Richard Vautrey's statement here](#))

Plans are developing in each CCG to be sensitive to the situation in each area as COVID takes its course and the normal winter pressures start to apply, so that services can be stepped down, or up in the light of circumstances, pressures and capacity to address priority issues. We will continue to be involved in this work to protect general practice and their staff.

We are always receptive to hear issues at first hand from you so do not hesitate to contact us if you have an issue or need help.