



Mword Issue 82 - Dr Michelle Drage's latest update for GPs and practice teams

3 March 2021

Dear Colleague Welcome to our latest Mword. As you know, our CEO Michelle is currently on the mend from her own bout of Covid-19 and I am deputising until she returns to us. The ongoing challenge of the vaccination campaign continues to be not only to vaccinate newly eligible patients, but also those who have not accepted their initial invite, or who are likely to be hesitant about the health benefits. We know that this hesitancy can be overcome using the trusted relationships that we have with our patients, and with the practice team's understanding of, and place within, local communities. And the pace of the vaccination programme gives hope that we may see a return to some degree of normality some time soon! Today, I have the following for you:

Today's Budget Statement.

Government White Paper on health reform, and Provider Selection Consultation.

New SOP and QCovid – a template letter for patients.

Vaccine update: i March rollout plans; ii Ramadan; iii Volunteers.

Connecting sessional GPs.

Burnout and support.

GPC elections and voting.

And finally … change.

1. Today's Budget Statement. Across London we know that you and your teams are catching up with routine screening and clinical activity, whilst bracing yourselves for the anticipated growth in mental ill health and post-Covid complications in our patient population. We all need support in the months ahead as the country moves through the Government's Roadmap of easing restrictions, which is why today's Budget is all the more disappointing. We will continue to call for additional resources for general practice and an extension of pandemic funding for key programmes, currently due to come to an abrupt stop at the end of this month. Today's Budget Statement included little positive news from a primary care/ general practice perspective. Much of the focus was on support for businesses affected by Covid closures, and support for workers – ranging from furlough scheme extension to increased apprenticeship incentives. The one significant point to note is that the lifetime allowance for GP pensions has been frozen until at least 2025/26. Read more here. It is also a timely reminder to make sure, as we approach year-end, that you are on top of all your Covid-related expenses. Our handy reckoner/ tracker is here.

2. Government White Paper on health reform, and Provider Selection Consultation. As you know the Secretary of State for Health recently released a new White Paper "Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all". Intended to "improve cooperation, reduce bureaucracy, strengthen accountability to Parliament" and "make the system work for those who work in the system", the proposals are wide ranging and cover a lot of ground, from establishing Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) in law and

giving them commissioning power over primary care, through to vesting Ministers with additional powers and introducing a new "Duty to collaborate". The proposals need to be considered alongside the recent ICS consultation, previous digital first proposals and other changes to the provider and procurement landscape. We are liaising with the DHSC to make further representations on the proposals in the White Paper before the draft Bill is published. Please feel free to share your comments with us. There is also a live consultation on the Provider Selection Regime which sets out a new approach to procurement of services which would remove scrutiny and procurement rules. We will be submitting a response before the closing date of 7 April. Again, please feel free to share your comments with us.

3. New SOP and QCovid – a template letter for patients. You can see the newly revised SOP here. Changes are minimal, but include details of changes to the Shielding Patient List (SPL). Last week the DHSC issued a letter about the new Covid-19 Population Risk Assessment tool that is being used to identify those at highest risk from Covid-19. If they are not already on the SPL they will be automatically added, and therefore eligible for vaccination. The tool has been developed by the QRisk team led by Prof Julia Hippisley-Cox at Oxford. Patients were notified directly last week and this week, and may contact you in advance of their records being updated on your system. We have created a template letter which might be helpful for you to use in addressing any patient concerns raised with you.

4. Vaccine update: i March rollout plans; ii Ramadan; iii Volunteers. Letters from NHS England issued yesterday indicate plans to significantly increase the speed of the vaccination programme through March. See MWord 81 for a reminder of the position on movement of vaccine. Don't forget that we have lots of links and resources which can help address patient concerns about vaccination. And with Ramadan fast approaching, the British Islamic Medical Association is highlighting messaging from Islamic scholars who have said that the vaccine does not invalidate the fast. If you are interested in helping PHE London address vaccine hesitancy in your community and would be willing to speak at a virtual community event, please email sam.dowling@lmc.org.uk.

5. Connecting sessional GPs. Don't forget that our sessional GP matching offer is still open and we have already had hundreds of offers of availability. If you are a GP looking to take on additional sessions you can register here. If your practice would like access to the list of available GPs, please email connectinggps@lmc.org.uk. Full details of how this offer works for all parties can be found here.

6. Burnout and support. Our GP Professional Support Network launched last year and is there to help you manage through these difficult times. And don't forget that your LMC is not only here to update you on guidance and support your practice, but also to support you as an individual, whether you are a GP, a CD, a practice nurse, a practice manager, or another key member of the general practice team. Please do let us know if you are struggling.

7. GPC elections and voting. Voting is now open for election to GPC UK representing the following London seats. Voting closes at noon on 19 March.

Enfield & Haringey/Camden & Islington/ Barnet/Kensington & Chelsea/Westminster
Merton, Sutton & Wandsworth/Kingston & Richmond

As long as you are a GP in the named area, you are eligible to vote. You do not need to be a BMA member. If you are not a BMA member, you can register to vote by creating a temporary web account. The BMA election team (elections@bma.org.uk) can assist with any issues or questions.

8. And finally … change. We know that in London there is huge value in practices being run by GPs who live amongst the communities they care for and are trusted by. We continue to press upon stakeholders that - regardless of ownership structure - GP partners and their teams need to be able to work collaboratively within practices, between practices, across PCNs and in the widest sense. We believe that GPs should maintain autonomy to deliver services in the best way to meet the needs of their patients and local communities. We rely on commissioners and regulators as well as providers to ensure that patients and staff experience no negative impact in the way that general practice operates regardless of who 'owns' the contract. Remember, you can keep abreast of guidance and advice on our dedicated Covid-19 website (or type lmc.org.uk/covid-19 into your browser) which provides guidance on all considerations around the Covid-19 Vaccinations Enhanced Service. And as ever, I welcome your feedback at mword@lmc.org.uk. The team of experts and leaders here at Londonwide LMCs are by your side. Keep well. Stay safe. With best wishes Dr Lisa Harrod-Rothwell Deputy CEO, Londonwide LMCs

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