Londonwide LMCs is currently conducting presentations for all LMC meetings and open GP meetings across the capital about how your strategic health authority, NHS London, is preparing to inform PCTs that they need to undertake two consultations around proposals contained in “Healthcare for London: A Framework for Action.”

Essentially, the Framework for Action is a ten year strategy written by Lord Ara Darzi which proposes major changes across all elements of Primary and Secondary Care. Lord Darzi, whilst originally the author of the report, has now moved on to conduct a wider review of healthcare across England. It is important to remember that NHS London has approved Lord Darzi’s proposals for London and it is these plans that you and your patients may be consulted upon over the coming months.

We understand that between November 2007 and February 2008, PCTs will be consulting locally on the 8 care pathways outlined in “A Framework for Action”. A second, more detailed consultation is likely to follow on soon after. In addition, a new decision making process for the consultations has been initiated by NHS London. This means that a Joint PCT Committee has been formed by NHS London to make the final decision. Individual PCT Boards will be bound by the overall decision of the Joint PCT Committee.

Our position on polyclinics remains that for some practices it may be a viable option. For others it may not. Your LMC will be concerned to ensure that whatever options for general practice services are put on the table, the essence of high quality general practice is maintained.

Our message to you is simple. Doing nothing is not an option. Do consider what options are open to you locally in terms of: joining forces with another practice; examine how your patients perceive your service, your opening hours – can you do anything differently to ensure your patients continue to value you?

And finally...don’t panic. Contact your local LMC representatives and keep them informed of any approaches your PCT makes in terms of the services that you offer. Together we can secure the future of general practice.

Stay in touch, stay informed and keep updated by logging onto www.lmc.org.uk.

2 GP retainer scheme – still alive and kicking!
The GP Retainer Scheme continues, despite rumours of its demise, and it is still funded for all PCTs as part of the baseline allocation.


If you have any queries or would like further information, please contact Victoria Dennis, the administrator for the scheme. Victoria works from Monday to Wednesday and she is available via telephone (020 7866 3139) or email (vdennis@londondeanery.ac.uk).

3 We are here to help you
Londonwide LMCs general practice support service provides timely advice and practical support to steer GPs and practice staff through the NHS. This advice may comprise telephone/email/face to face contact on matters ranging from:

- Contractual issues
- Complaints
- Support at meetings with the PCT
- Disputes between the practice and PCT
- Employment problems/disputes
- Partnership affairs
- Premises issues

This list is not exclusive. No problem is too small and a quick phone call could save you a lot of time and anxiety. We will do our best to support you if you think you might be facing a difficult meeting with your PCT and we would definitely urge you to contact us if you are being investigated by the PCT under its performance or contractual procedures.

In the first instance you should speak to or email Nora Breen, GP Support Manager on 0207 387 2034 ext 241; email nbreen@lmc.org.uk. The Directorate is headed up by Jean Hassell, the Executive Director, tel: 0207 387 2034 ext 260; email: jhassell@lmc.org.uk.

4 Mental health contact list
Dr Kathy McAdam Freud has been working hard to co-ordinate the completion of an informative contact list for the use of primary care professionals to Southwark Mental Health Crisis Services. Doctors have long been asking for a definitive, easy to use directory of what mental health services are available and how to access them. The directory is close to being finalised and will be circulated to you once it is complete.

In the meantime, we have been advised that any referrals should be sent in the first instance to your local Assessment and Brief Treatment Team (CREST) who will then redirect patients to the appropriate service. Between 9am and 5pm the contact details are as follows:

For the South Southwark CREST tel: 020 3228 3500. Team leader Vanessa.smith@slam.nhs.uk.

For the North Southwark CREST tel: 020 7188 6991. Team leader Simon.rayner@slam.nhs.uk.

Details for out of hours contact will follow.

If you experience any problems with accessing the services you should contact Andy Shanks the Community Manager on Tel: 020 7525 2751 or andy.shanks@slam.nhs.uk.

5 New qualification for health service administration
The Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Managers, Administrators and Receptionists (AMSPAR) has introduced a new qualification in Health Services Administration (HSA). This replaces the current qualifications in general practice reception and hospital reception.

The HSA is designed for administrators or receptionists in-post and is suitable for those employed in both primary and secondary care. Students will be provided with practical and personal skills to enable them to develop and progress as an administrator within the healthcare sector. The minimum guided learning hours for the course will be 30. Candidates will need to gain a pass in the nationally set assignment in order to
achieve the qualification. The HSA was launched last month.

Further information is available from the AMPSAR website at http://www.amspar.co.uk/.

6 **BMA partnership agreement drafting service**
The BMA has launched a partnership agreement drafting service to assist practices in ensuring that they have a comprehensive partnership agreement in place. The service provides legal advice and the drafting of a comprehensive formal legal agreement to govern all aspects of inter-partner relations.

BMA members are entitled to the service at the price of £1,500 plus VAT. The new service is only available to practices in which at least one of the partners is a BMA member.

Email info.pds@bma.org.uk or call 020 7383 6128 for further information. Further details are available on the BMA website at http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/content/partnershipagreementdrafting.

7 **New NHS Connecting for Health website**
NHS Connecting for Health (CfH) has launched a new website giving useful information and guidance to SHAs, PCTs and GPs on GP Systems of Choice at www.connectingforhealth.co.uk/gpsoc.

The website has been developed as a guide to help understanding of the activities needed to progress, and the reasons behind, GP Systems of Choice. A full guide can be downloaded in pdf format from the website.

CfH anticipates that this will be the first point of contact for any guidance or questions that you may have. The site will be updated regularly with the most up-to-date information as the programme commences.

8 **NHS London single equality scheme consultation**
NHS London has launched a consultation on its proposed Single Equality Scheme.


NHS London would welcome any comments on the proposed scheme. If, after reading the draft scheme and the action plan, you have any comments, please send them to Marisa Howes at marisa.howes@london.nhs.uk before 26 November 2007.

9 **New guidance on our website**
Visit the new and improved LMC website (www.lmc.org.uk) to download the following guidance:

- Mental Capacity Act – GPC guidance
- Community hospital GPs – GPC “focus on” guidance