

The Local Medical Committee is a statutory body representing all National Health Service GPs in an area covered by a particular Health Authority. It includes members elected by GP Principals responsible to that Authority, who represent and are accountable to the GP electorate. Other GPs may be co-opted to represent special groups.

As the **local representative committee** for independent medical practitioners, the LMC has the statutory right to be consulted by the Health Authority (and henceforward by Primary Care Groups and Trusts) about the administration of GPs' contracts, and the local interpretation of their Terms of Service under the General Medical Services Regulations, including payment arrangements set out in the Statement of Fees and Allowances. The LMC will also be involved in local negotiations around Personal Medical Services Pilots.

In addition, the LMC has many responsibilities as regards complaints and disciplinary procedures affecting GPs; it represents the views of GPs to Health Authorities, local Authorities, NHS Trusts, other professional colleagues, Community Health Councils, and MPs, and it liaises with the GPs' national negotiators, the General Practitioners Committee of the BMA (GPC), and with local and national media.

The LMC has traditionally looked after the interests of individual constituents. This pastoral responsibility includes advising and assisting GPs and making representations on their behalf, helping sick doctors, and conciliating in practice disputes.

The LMC is an independent body paid for by GPs themselves via a compulsory **Statutory Levy** based on a specified amount per patient, per annum. Expenditure of this Levy is restricted to administration of the Committee and may not be used for anything else. In addition, GP Principals are asked to contribute to a **Voluntary Levy**, which is used to finance the LMCs' contributions to the national GMS Defence Fund.

- **The General Practitioners Committee** (GPC) is a standing committee of the British Medical Association (BMA). It is made up of GPs elected to represent LMC based constituencies, together with representatives of the LMC and BMA conferences and others to serve the interests of all GPs. The GPC negotiates GPs' Pay, Terms and Conditions of Service with the Department of Health, and prepares evidence for the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body (DDRB). The annual LMC Conference guides GPC policy. The channels of communication between GPs, LMCs, the GPC, BMA, and the Health Service are shown in the diagram ante.
- **The General Medical Services Defence Fund Ltd** (incorporated in 1980) began life as a Trust established in 1948 to pay for the expenses of the profession's negotiators and the conference of Local Medical Committees. In addition to honoraria and travel costs for GPs attending meetings of the GPC and its working parties, expenditure includes payments for the GP Negotiators, the Annual Conference of Representatives of LMCs, legal and professional fees in relation to matters affecting GPs' Terms and Conditions of Service, and the costs of preparing the GPs' annual submission to the DDRB. The Fund derives its income from two sources, namely voluntary contributions from doctors collected through LMCs, and dividends and interest on investments. Annual quotas from LMCs are calculated on the basis of the number of patients for whom the corresponding Health Authority is responsible.

The Devon LMCs have identified the following as the **core values** governing their present and future activities:

- **The LMC is a democratic body**
Elected by, and comprising, local GPs, the LMC seeks to represent the diverse interests which make up General Practice locally, and to uphold the best traditions of independent contractor status, while being receptive to debate about alternative models of primary healthcare provision, and striving also to represent the interests of 'Part 1' doctors and Non Principals.

- **The LMC is a representative body**

The LMC regularly canvases the opinions of its constituent GPs, and is always ready to listen to, and respond to their views. It represents those views to those responsible for the family doctor service and to the profession's national negotiators (the GPC), in correspondence and via the annual LMCs' Conference, and to the BMA, GMC, national and local government departments, MPs, the media, and the public at large. (The LMC represents and is accountable to GPs, whereas PCGs represent local communities and are accountable to those communities and to the Health Authority).

- **The LMC is a statutory body**

As the local representative committee for independent General Medical Practitioners, the LMC has many rights and obligations enshrined in the NHS Acts and Regulations. It is the medium through which GPs, as a profession, are consulted about major issues affecting the NHS, and about GPs' Terms and Conditions of Service, contracts, professional and ethical responsibilities, remuneration, complaints and discipline, out-of-hours responsibilities, etc.

- **The LMC is a professional body**

The LMC seeks to promote quality and uphold standards of professional practice, in co-operation with other agencies, by means of encouragement and example, through promotion of best practice, and by offering assistance to GPs needing to improve. To bolster GPs' morale, it seeks to emphasise the achievements of General Practice and promote the benefits it brings to patient care.

- **The LMC is an independent body**

The LMC intends to exercise its right to be consulted about the use of GMS resources by Health Authorities, PCGs, and, in due course, PCTs, and to ensure that the allocation of resources is undertaken equitably, in a manner which is fair, honest, and transparent. The LMC seeks to guide Health Authorities, PCGs (and PCTs) on Primary Care development and clinical governance, and the development of the Health Improvement Programme. It will continue to be responsible for organising the election of GPs to PCGs and their successors, for so long as GPs locally believe that to be appropriate, always recognising that the LMC will be available to represent GPs in any disputes which may occur in future between GPs and the PCGs, or Trusts, of which they are part.

- **The LMC is a source of information and advice for all GPs**

The LMC advises and informs its constituent GPs about changes to the Health Service, which may affect them or their patients, and acts as an information resource on all such matters. It is also available to provide help to its constituents, e.g. in assisting them in dealing with complaints, helping sick doctors, and conciliating in practice disputes. The LMC acts as a focus of debate among local GPs on all issues affecting Primary Care provision, especially those involving district-wide considerations, asserting its claim to be the principal source of GP advice, both to its constituents and to the Health Authority, PCGs, and PCTs, on inter-professional, doctor/patient, public health, and NHS strategic issues.

Local Medical Committees and the Health Service

