

## Report on Extraordinary Meetings of Devon General Practice on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008

The main Conference Suite at Sandy Park was attended over the two meetings arranged for the day by well over 400 GPs and Practice Managers. 417 registered but we are aware that a few latecomers "slipped in at the back"! 316 people filled in feedback forms.

Dr Charlie Daniels, Chairman of Devon LMC chaired both events and I made the scripted GPC presentation in the afternoon as airport problems meant that we were only joined by Dr Dean Marshall, a GPC National Negotiator and Chairman of GPC Scotland for the evening session (in which he presented). We have 5 GPC Representatives based in Devon and Somerset and all were present and spoke. The most important parts of the events were the imparting of information to the delegates (as there has been much spin and perhaps some deliberate misinformation through various sources) and the contributions from the floor in the form of statements and questions.

Our feedback form asked for views both before and after the presentations and before the presentation 38% planned to reject "Imposition A" and the vast majority of those wanted to do so both "because bullying must always be resisted" and because they wished "to register my protest at the behaviour of HMG". After the presentations only 14% remained ready to reject "Imposition A" with its consequences.

Less than 20% were happy to engage in a process of Extending Opening Hours for their surgery but nearly 2/3rds were both happy to continue to engage in an ongoing process of informing patients as to how the decisions of HMG with respect to Primary Care might affect their health and health care and to write to their MP and/or the Government to give their views as to the way HMG have behaved in this matter or any other matters in the future.

Other important matters were also fed back upon but as this Newsletter will be seen by the GP press and I have recently been let down badly by the behaviour of one of the three main providers I will not report them in a public arena that could be subject to misreporting and spin. Those particular matters have been fed back to the GPC Negotiating team.

Those attending the meetings fed back some very personal feelings on the forms. There is a lot of anger and disappointment at the behaviour of Government. Many have always believed that Government will behave fairly and honestly with the people they represent and that common pact has been broken in this instance. Many wonder how you can negotiate with people who seem to have no regard for sticking to their word given in previous negotiation and also they wonder how trust can ever be restored. Three years of clawing back funding by serial zero % uplifts in funds followed by a fourth year in which Government "evidence" to the DDRB called for yet another zero % increase have undone most of the good things within the "New Contract". Morale and hope for the future is now genuinely at an even lower level than in 2002. People write of feeling helpless, disillusioned and angry. That this

has come about after all the hard work done in practices to achieve the high quality of care as measured through QOF and the fact that the evidence-based nature of QOF is threatened with being undermined by the removal of funds from QOF and their re-allocation to “fix” a politically manufactured problem of alleged poor access angers them more. Only under this Government would the best ever National Survey result of satisfaction with a publicly provided service with an 86% overall complete satisfaction be spun into a massive problem where, according to Ben Bradshaw and Alan Johnson “the main thing that people complain about within the NHS is access to their GP”. So nobody complains about MRSA and C. Diff death and complications caused by Government drives to increase bed occupancy to dangerous levels? Nobody complains that treatments available in one area are not available elsewhere in this alleged National Health Service? Nobody complains that the constant Government obsession with targets and with counting things that can be counted detracts from managers actually spending time helping to improve patient services? Pull the other one! This is all about distracting public attention from the myriad cock ups and manifest mistakes of this tired and confused administration.

Through written and verbal feedback we have been asked if the LMC can arrange what might be called a “GP Experience Survey” or “GPES” and this idea has merit and will be given serious consideration. I wonder whether that could be run across all LMCs and I have already quietly broached the idea with colleagues around the country. The GPC is limited by trade union law in what it may and may not do. LMCs are not subject to all the same constraints but we must consider the

effects on our local relationships. I will bat this about and report back as soon as I am able. In the meantime please feed back to me at [admin@devonlmc.org](mailto:admin@devonlmc.org) questions that you feel could be helpful in such a survey.

Finally can I thank: Dean Marshall for taking a day out of his holiday with his children (it is half term in Scotland this week) and suffering an appalling journey from Edinburgh to Exeter; Drs Gary Tudor, Roger Bulley, Beth McCarron-Nash, Mark Selman and Sue Overall who are our local GPC members (there via numerous routes!) for putting their heads above the parapet; my LMC Executive members for their attendance and our Secretariat Team for all the preparatory and follow up work that this meeting required and still requires. A minimum of 417 people turned out on a busy Monday to listen and to talk. There was initial anger at the seeming inability of the BMA/GPC to get the Government to understand what they risk destroying by their behaviour. Later there was understanding that GPC negotiators, and Dean Marshall in particular, have similar emotions. I hope that there is also better understanding that although anger can be helpful it can also be damaging and that, as I was reminded yesterday by an old friend doing a similar job to mine, cool heads are needed. This could be a long campaign and as I said to my friend - “In the end the fight will have to be led locally but in every locality in a coordinated way so it will have to be the LMCs at the fore.”

Please watch out for e-bulletins, Devon Voice postings and editions of the “Purple Pages”. This may well be the start of a long campaign to save our profession as I fear more attacks in the near future and this one is not yet over. Vote when the poll comes to you. Please do not abstain – that would be spun to say we do not care when we really, really do!

#### **Dedicated Devon LMC Web Page**

All details relating to the current contract negotiations and the GPC Poll of the profession are available on the Devon LMC Website see page - [www.devonlmc.info/33](http://www.devonlmc.info/33)