

SHEFFIELD LOCAL MEDICAL COMMITTEE

NEWSFLASH

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR MEDICAL COVER 2009/10 & 2010/11

The LMC Executive has been contacted by a number of practices regarding clarification of the agreement between the LMC and NHS Sheffield for Christmas and New Year opening.

Following the audit of practice workload in 2008/9 over the Christmas period, the LMC Executive tried to negotiate a deal that we feel is reasonable, both from the point of view of General Practices and their staff, and NHS Sheffield and their need to provide adequate cover over a long Christmas break. We have tried, on the basis of the evidence from the audit, to develop a system that will provide extra capacity during the periods where patients request to see their doctors, thus allowing practices to shut early, at 2 pm if they so wish. It has always been with the intention of negotiating a two year deal which, if successful, can be used as a model for future years. In good faith, the LMC Executive negotiated increased capacity until 2 pm on 24 and 31 December for the next two years, rather than having to negotiate individual alterations to contracts in 2010/11.

The agreement appears to have caused concern amongst a number of practices in view of the fact that 'eves' fall on Thursdays this year. However, we would hope that if this model proves to be successful, it can be used in negotiations in the future.

I have discussed final clarification with Karen Curran, Head of Primary Care at NHS Sheffield, and would like to reiterate our understanding of the position. We agreed that practices this year and next year would remain open, with normal telephone and medical cover, until 2 pm. Following this, telephone triage could be handed over to the GP Collaborative or other out of hours (OOH) provider, with a view to them providing their usual service between 2 pm and 6.30 pm. This would include telephone triage, advice, seeing patients where appropriate at the PCC, and PCC transport.

There has been some discussion with regards to home visits. It is our understanding that where the GP Collaborative has capacity, and they are within their targets, they will provide these visits as in their usual manner. However, in the event of excess workload or, for example, a surge in Swine Flu, a GP from each practice would be available to provide home visit cover to their own patients. A named doctor would have to be available for this service from each practice. This cover would end at 6.30 pm.

The purpose of the GP Collaborative's fax to practices was simply to try and clarify individual practice requirements. It would be the LMC Executive's view that most practices would choose the option to stay open to 2 pm as part of the 2 year deal. Practices that elect to close at 12 noon would, unfortunately, have to work the full hours as stated in their practice leaflets on 24 and 31 December 2010.

We have, as we stated was our intention, tried to clarify and simplify the arrangements for Christmas and New Year's Eves for the next two years, in the belief that this was a fair deal for all parties involved. The LMC Executive hopes that this has clarified any outstanding concerns.