



Breach notices: Londonwide LMCs offers support to practices

PRESS RELEASE

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Londonwide LMCs' view on practices' early closure during Christmas

Practices across London recognise that Christmas Eve is a period of low demand and for many years have operated a reduced service or switched to an out of hours or alternative provider before the end of core hours on Christmas Eve.

The GMS contract is non-specific on hours of opening on Christmas Eve and requires only 'reasonable access to services'. It is the firm opinion of Londonwide LMCs, the GPC and BMA Law, that the GMS contract does not require that practices are physically open during all of core hours. This was made clear in guidance issued by the GPC and Londonwide LMCs, and for many years have operated a reduced service or switched to an out of hours or alternative provider before the end of core hours on Christmas Eve.

Last year one of the PCT clusters objected to this but LMC negotiated a reasonable response. A similar compromise was negotiated with NHSE (London) early in December but following a letter from Dr David Geddes this agreement was withdrawn and practices were told they were expected to remain open until 18.30 Christmas Eve.

From 15.30 on Christmas Eve NHSE (London) staff telephoned 237 practices in London. These were practices that had applied for permission or notified NHSE (London) that they would switch to an alternative provider before 18.30.

12 practices in London had transferred to an alternative provider and those have since been issued with a breach of contract notice.

Christmas Eve is a period of low to zero demand. Londonwide LMCs contacted three practices (1 small 2 medium) and only one call was reported to have been taken and no reports of any patient contact at all were reported to us from two practices.

This opinion is shared by LMC, GPC and BMA Law in regard to the contract requirements.

Londonwide LMCs are contacting affected practices and offering support and guidance if they wish to dispute the breach notices issued by NHSE (London) and we are liaising with GPC to ensure their resources are adequately mobilised. Because this is a national issue, Londonwide LMCs will be working with other LMC leads across England.

It is Londonwide LMCs' view that NHSE (London) have wasted valuable resources in contacting so many practices and view their action as mean-spirited and vindictive with no benefit to patient services.

Ends

Notes to editors:

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Londonwide LMCs is the only independent body in London representing 6000 GPs and over 1300 Practice Managers and the wider practice team. Local medical committees are the statutory body representing GPs and practices; every London borough has a local medical committee and supported by Medical Directors working for the umbrella organisation (Londonwide LMCs) covering NW, NCE and South London.