



## Dr Michelle Drage's Christmas and New Year message

Thank you for simply still being here after the year you and all London general practices have had.

With relentless pressure coming from clinically necessary activity, and the equally relentless weight of needless political choices, it's easy to lose sight of what you have accomplished over the last 12 months, but it is worth reflecting on.

You've played an absolute blinder since the start of the year, when we first got our hands on vaccines. Whilst general practice teams across the country have delivered more than half (52m out of 97m) of all first, second and booster jabs, the numbers only tell half the story. You worked through the night to get clinics ready, you visited the vulnerable, talked around the hesitant, made volunteers from your communities part of something that gave them meaning in those dark months, kept yourselves and your teams going – sometimes at great personal cost - and you moved mountains to mitigate mistakes further up the chain and keep the service going for patients.

When things were far from back to 'normal'; suddenly your patients were told they should see you as if there was no pandemic going on. You found new ways to see them safely, laid on more appointments and set the record straight where you could in the face of sustained untruths from powerful people.

At Londonwide LMCs we've been by your side throughout the year, speaking up when you were told you weren't giving enough vaccines in the winter, speaking up again when you were told you were giving them too readily in the summer. We're still at it, now raising the disparity between supply and demand, and the abuse practices face with commissioners, MPs, the police and counsellors. We've spoken to numerous journalists telling your stories so patients can understand the human side of general practice – and the impact of abuse on an already demoralised workforce. My heartfelt thanks to each and every person who shared your stories with us, and while testimony and lived experience is massively powerful I know how much it costs to share it.

We know that patients still value and need community based general practice and their local neighbourhood practices, though it's harder than ever to notice the unassuming majority who come and go from their appointments while remaining quietly grateful.

Just as before the pandemic, your Londonwide LMCs teams continue to track the dozens of funding streams you're all supposed to access and trying to ensure they reach the frontline. We're still supporting practices with mergers, regulatory investigations, contractual issues and so much more. And please remember, our GP Professional Support Network is always there for you.

And so from me and the whole Londonwide team, Season's Greetings to you and your loved ones, and here's hoping again that the 2022 will turn out to be a safe and peaceful one.

Dr Michelle Drage MBBS FRCGPCEO, Londonwide LMCs