

## Somerset Local Medical Committee

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### **CURRENT SOMERSET LMC STATEMENT ON “CHOOSE AND BOOK”**

- Somerset LMC supports the rights of patients to be referred to any NHS funded service. The committee believes that choice of care is an integral part of NHS services and part of good practice in the GP consultation.
- The committee has never accepted that the choice of five providers should be a mandatory part of the choice of care offered to patients as part of their consultation. It believes that choice should not be arbitrarily limited.
- The committee welcomes the provision of any software to GPs designed to help them in their consultation, including the discussion of choice of care with patients. The committee remains unconvinced, however, that the Directory of Services (DoS) linked to “Choose and Book” is sufficiently detailed, comprehensive and flexible to facilitate the process of choosing the most appropriate care for individual patients. The committee is clear that patients, together with their GPs, must be able to select a specific clinician they wish to refer to and insists that the “Choose and Book” software must accommodate this.
- Somerset LMC deplores the political imperative to start “Choose and Book” prior to the development of an appropriate, fully tested IT solution and the demonstration of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of such a solution.
- The committee is clear that any IT solution for “Choose and Book” must be easily accessed, piloted prior to widespread introduction and must not significantly impact on the patient consultation and referral pathway. In particular, GPs should only be required to make a few key strokes in order to produce a referral number and patient password. The committee welcomes the pilots being established in Somerset but has yet to be convinced that the current IT solution addresses all its concerns.
- Any IT solution for “Choose and Book” must also address the concerns regarding patient confidentiality.
- GP participation in “choose and book” is not mandatory. This view was echoed at the recent Conference of LMCs, which rejected participation in “choose and Book”. The committee would not recommend such participation until it is satisfied that its concerns have been fully addressed.

- In addition we anticipate GPs will only participate in “choose and book” if and when the benefits to patient care and general practice are clear, for example, through improvements in the referral pathway and waiting list information.
- The LMC considers that Non-participation in “choose and book” should not prevent GPs from participating in Practice Based Commissioning (PBC).
- Any additional workload generated in Primary Care in relation to this national initiative must be full funded before Somerset LMC can recommend participation by its constituent GPs.
- Staff and practitioner training should be funded.
- Somerset LMC has been clear that a local Booking Management Service (BMS) should provide the booking element of “choose and Book”. The committee is therefore pleased that Somerset has been allowed to develop this model of booking.
- Whilst the development of the Somerset BMS will remove many of the obstacles to GP participation in “choose and book” by addressing a number of the LMC’s concerns regarding practice workload etc. it does not, in itself, address all of the committee’s concerns regarding GP participation in this national initiative.

In conclusion, Somerset LMC welcomes the development of the Booking Management Service model for the implementation of “choose and book” in Somerset, but continues to have a number of reservations regarding the IT solution and workload implications for GPs and their practice staff. The committee is clear that participation in “choose and book” is voluntary for GPs and its concerns have not been addressed sufficiently for the committee to recommend participation in this national initiative in Somerset, other than on a pilot basis.

**Berge Balian**  
**Chair, Somerset LMC**  
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