

20th March 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing in my new role as Chairman of the Somerset LMC. These are sobering times and I am deeply grateful for Nick for leading us safely through the past four years. He has worked hard to raise the profile of General Practice forging strong relationships with system leaders who as result have a better understanding of how hard we work to support our patients here in Somerset. He has volunteered not to venture too far given present circumstances.

Primary Care is about to change and not in a way any of us imagined. Yesterday NHSE issued guidance followed quickly by the GPC on how practices can concentrate their efforts to ensure care continues for those who need it especially the most vulnerable. Locally primary care leaders are meeting now on a daily basis as part of the Primary Care Operational Board to ensure issues hampering our efforts are dealt with as quickly as possible.

Thank you to our practice managers feeding into the LMC's daily survey to ensure we are all aware of workforce resilience. Jill and Mandy were instrumental in its creation and our office team in the compilation of your responses at the end of each day. Thank you Paula for leading and supporting our nursing teams who have continued to run clinics delivering face to face care under testing circumstances.

Thank you all for embracing consulting in new ways from total telephone triage to video consultations and eConsult as we try support symptomatic patients remotely. Our IT leads in the background are working hard to improve issues as they arise such ensuring remote access for the entire GP population. Availability of continuity laptops is being tackled and I hope those arriving can be shared across primary care networks on a "needed most" basis. The Training Hub lead by Martyn and Jill has produced online resources so we can be more confident as we work differently. These will be regularly updated to help those like myself who have until now done little remote access. I am proud to say I have done video consultations this week via AccuRx and my lovely volunteer patient and I were able to demonstrate to my colleagues at work how easy it was to use. Any bright ideas to make life a little easier are welcomed and we can share this on our regular updates.

Thank you to our Clinical Directors who have been working hard in a capacity no DES could include. Barry, our Medical Director has been a great support to them.

The issue of PPE is repeatedly being raised and will continue to be raised until it is no longer an issue. Testing of healthcare professionals is also on the repeat list. Issues raised by school closures were discussed as this will impact on workforce force numbers in the upcoming weeks. We are reminded

Somerset Local Medical Committee Crown Medical Centre Venture Way Taunton TA2 8QY

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by our pharmacy colleagues that they too are under pressure and sticking to prescribing guidelines will prevent this service from being overwhelmed.

Please get to know your neighbours. We will need to pool resources soon and you will be supported through this. Our strength in General Practice has always been our ability to get on and do things and we are already showing our system colleagues how we can do this quickly, safely and efficiently. Look after your staff and support your colleagues as change is always unsettling. Please contact us if you are struggling as we are here to support you.

We will regularly update you as we have done to date and know this storm too will pass.

Yours faithfully



Dr Karen Sylvester
Chairman
Somerset LMC

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