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To:

Chairs and Secretaries of LMCs
Members of GPC (UK)
Members of the LMC UK Conference Agenda Committee
Members of the GP Trainees Committee
Members of the Sessional GPs Committee

15 January 2021

Dear Colleagues

UK LMC Conference 2021

I am very pleased to invite you to the Annual Conference of Representatives of LMCs (UK) 2021 and am writing to tell you a little more about the details of preparing for the event, which is due to take place on 12 and 13 May.

I would appreciate it if you could circulate this information to your members as soon as possible, so they can start thinking about motions now.

Please note that in view of the ongoing devastating pandemic and the uncertainty of how the situation may unfold over the next few months I, along with my agenda committee, have decided, with some regret, that this will be a virtual conference rather than “in person”. We did not take this decision lightly. I am sure that we would all have welcomed the opportunity to meet together face to face (particularly when we all hope to be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel by May). However, we believe this is the right decision for both the profession and for the safety of the staff who help support our conference.

Motions

Information about submitting motions to conference is attached (appendix 1 and 2), which should be done via this [link](#) by noon, 19 February. All LMCs, the GPC, the GPC Sessionals Committee, GPC Trainees Committee, and the Chairs of the Devolved Nations LMC Conferences are invited to submit motions for debate at the LMC UK Conference. These motions will reflect what your Committee thinks is important at the current time, what it would like debated at the Conference, and what new GPC UK policies it wishes to form, which may then ultimately influence BMA policy through the ARM.

To make the process of submission and prioritisation for debate more straightforward, we are using a ‘heading system’ whereby LMCs select one of the suggested headings under which their motion falls. If you think any of your motions fall outside these subject areas, you can submit them in an ‘Other’ category. The agenda committee will then review the motions for debate as per the standing orders.

Format of Conference

While the structure of conference is still being finalised, I can tell you that conference will be a two-day event starting on the morning of 12 May (timing to be confirmed).



Given the virtual nature of the conference, and the need to receive several other routine reports, the time for debating motions can be relatively short. As such, it is possible that many submitted motions may not be able to be debated quite as written and they may be combined with similar motions from other LMCs. Could I ask you therefore please to submit only motions that your LMC thinks will contribute to the agenda and be useful in addressing and setting areas of new UK wide policy.

It is certainly my hope and expectation that the majority of motions will be focused on UK, rather than nation-specific issues, particularly as all four nations have already had their national LMC Conferences, where they had the opportunity to discuss nation-specific matters and agree national policy. Furthermore, national conference chairs are able to submit motions from their Conferences, which they wish to pass to the UK Conference, and thus onto the ARM.

To avoid potential disappointment, you must ensure that the motions you submit address UK relevant issues. We regret that nation-specific motions will have to be rejected and not prioritised for debate. That means you need to be careful about the language you use. Please do not reference nation-specific bodies like NHS England or Health Boards, for example, as that will also likely lead to your motion being rejected.

The agenda committee is always happy to receive suggestions from LMCs on ideas of how to format the Conference going forward. You can contact us by emailing info.lmconference@bma.org.uk.

Tone of Conference

We all know the unprecedented pressures facing general practice currently across the UK. Conference needs to be framed around how you wish to guide and instruct GPC UK to deal with these pressures, particularly in a post COVID landscape, rather than focussing on the pressures themselves.

With this in mind, the Agenda Committee has looked at how we wish to structure a conference that is forward-looking. As I have mentioned above, we are inviting motions to be submitted under a range of headings, many of which are designed to be strategic and constructive. While we will neither forget or underplay the unprecedented health crisis which our colleagues have been dealing with for over a year, hopefully, we will also be able to leave conference with a sense of optimism about what we wish to achieve for our branch of practice going into the future.

We should not simply talk about the problems themselves but instead, look to suggest solutions as to how they can be dealt with. Hopefully we will be able to work together, to guide the GPC as to what the solutions are and how we want them delivered.

Conference is our opportunity to make the voices of LMCs and the doctors and practices we represent heard. I do want to encourage you all to make the best possible use of this time, to make UK policy which is useful, clear, new, and most importantly of all, which will meet the key concerns and needs of the grassroots GPs we represent.

I, along with the agenda committee, look forward to receiving your motions and to “seeing” you at the conference in May.

Yours sincerely



Mark Corcoran

Chair of UK Conference of Representatives of LMCs

Chairs and Secretaries of LMCs
Members of the GPC UK
Members of the LMC UK Conference Agenda Committee
Members of the GP Trainees Committee
Members of the Sessional GPs Committee

15 January 2021

Dear Colleague

LMC Conference: 12-13 May 2021

The 2021 UK LMC Conference will be held virtually on Wednesday 12 May and Thursday 13 May. Timings are still being finalised but the day will start on the morning of 12 May. Further details on how to access the virtual conference will be sent out in due course.

Submission of motions

The deadline to submit motions is noon, 19 February 2021, which should be admitted via this link: <https://web2.bma.org.uk/Motions/lmcagenda.nsf/W?OpenForm&Login>. We aim to publish the final Agenda on the BMA website on 30 April, and it will also be emailed directly to LMCs as soon as it is available.

LMC UK Conference representatives and observers

365 seats have been allocated for representatives allocated according to Standing Orders 4 and 5, and the number of representatives to be appointed to attend by each LMC is listed in **Appendix 3**. If you have any queries concerning the allocation process, please email the secretariat at info.lmcconference@bma.org.uk

Representatives shall be registered medical practitioners appointed at the absolute discretion of the appropriate LMC. LMCs may appoint a deputy for any of their representatives who are unable to attend.

LMCs are asked to complete the registration form by the following link no later than Friday 26 March:

<https://events.bma.org.uk/uk-lmc-conference-2021/registration/Site/Register>. Please note that we would be unable to fulfil registration requests beyond that date. Instructions how to complete the registration form is available in **Appendix 4**. Please also remember to include your BMA membership number if applicable.

LMCs officers who are not members of the conference, and any other individuals the LMC chooses to nominate, may attend the conference as observers, subject to approval from the chair. Anyone wishing to attend the conference as an observer should complete the same [registration form](#).

All GPC UK, Agenda Committee, GP trainees and Sessional GPs committee members wishing to attend the UK conference and the ARM will also need to complete the online registration form by the deadline of 26 March.



Annual Representative Meeting

Please also indicate in the [registration form](#) whether you wish to attend the BMA's Annual Representative Meeting (ARM) which will be held later this year as an LMC representative and include the relevant BMA membership number. **You will not be able to process with registration without the BMA number.**

If the number of BMA members of conference who wish to attend the ARM exceeds the number of seats allocated, it will be necessary to conduct an electronic ballot on a regional basis. **We will contact you to confirm the ARM seats at a later date.**

Travel and accommodation – reimbursement of expenses

As the conference is being held virtually without the need to travel or pay for accommodation, there are no arrangements for the reimbursement of expenses for any members of conference.

Webcast photography

Please note that the LMC conference will be webcast live and the event that will be shared across BMA communication channels, including our website and across social media.

This conference is administered by the BMA and GPDF (joint data controllers).

Click [here](#) to read the BMA's privacy policy. The GPDF's privacy policy is included on the registration webpage and will need to be read and accepted. Please also see attached the joint BMA / GPDF defamation statement (**Appendix 5**).

Key GPC contacts for any queries and information:

General queries: info.lmconference@bma.org.uk

Catharina Ohman (Cohman@bma.org.uk) Senior Policy Advisor, GPC Secretariat (All queries relating to the business of conference and agenda)

Karen Day kday@bma.org.uk (Registering reps, conference attendees, motions, general admin)

Kathryn Reece kreece@bma.org.uk (Registering reps, conference attendees, motions, general admin).

Yours faithfully



Catharina Ohman
Senior Policy Advisor
General Practitioners Committee Secretariat

Instructions for entering LMC UK Conference motions 2021

Each LMC should have a single designated person to input their LMC Conference motions. These instructions are for that person. **If you represent several LMCs then you can login using one password and then use the drop down menu for the relevant LMC.**

Before going onto the website and inputting your motions you will need to:

- ensure that you have the correct email address registered on the database
- know your username and/or password.

Please ensure that you find out this information in plenty of time, do not leave it until you wish to input motions near the closing date. You can find out this information by emailing: kday@bma.org.uk.

Once you have the relevant information use your web browser to go to:

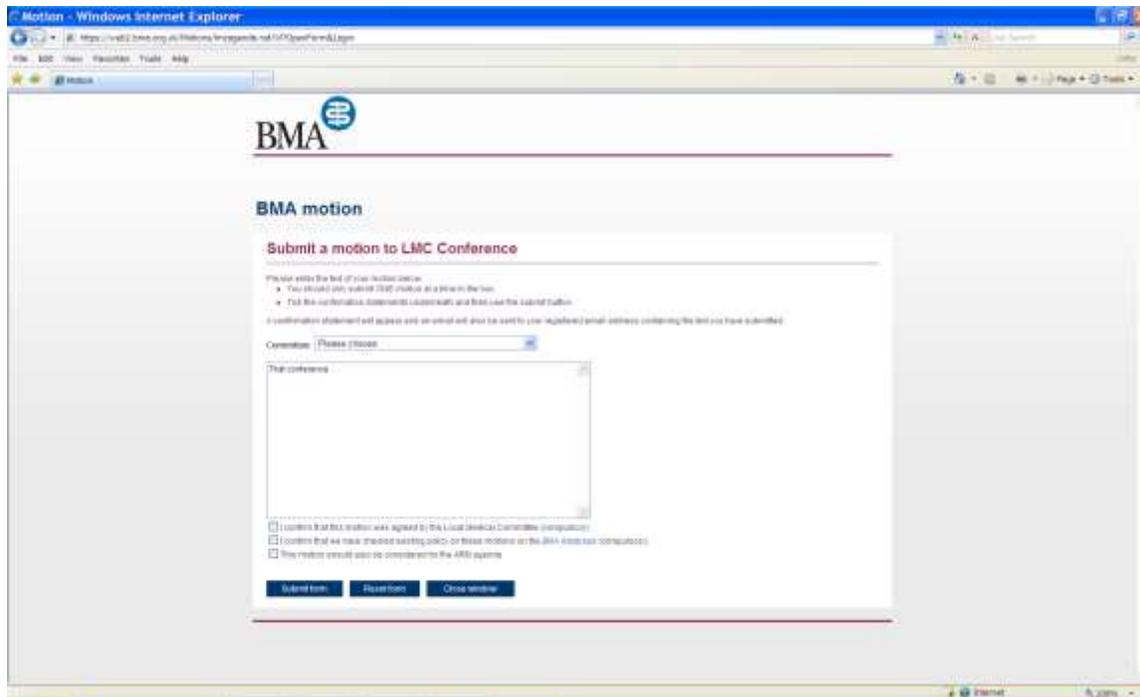
<https://web2.bma.org.uk/Motions/lmcagenda.nsf/W?OpenForm&Login>.

You will be asked to enter your username and password.

Once the system has logged you on you will be presented with a form to submit motions.

Individual motions must be submitted separately, ONE at a time. Motions not submitted separately will be rejected. You will receive a confirmation email (to the address you have registered with us) for each motion submitted.

The form looks like this:



Insert which LMC the motion is going to come from using the drop down menu.

Insert your subject heading, using the drop down menu, motions falling outside the current categories may be submitted in an 'Other' category.

Enter the text of the motion. **Please do not send duplicate motions** and make sure it is the **final wording of any motion you wish to submit** (please be careful with punctuation and grammar), as you cannot make amendments to motions through the database. If you wish to make an amendment to a motion already entered before the deadline (**Noon 19 February 2021**) please email kday@bma.org.uk as soon as possible.

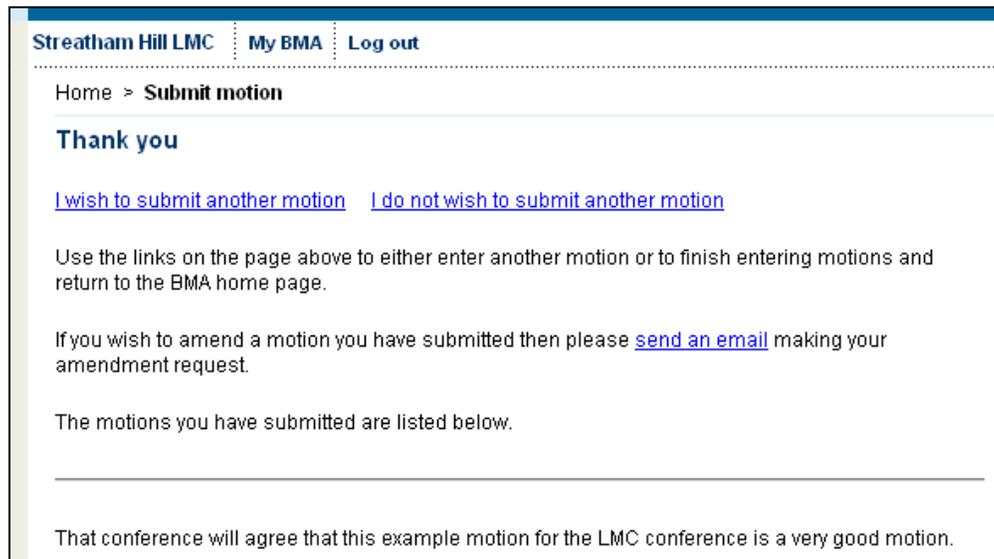
The motion text can be pasted from packages like 'Microsoft Word' but please be aware that some characters may not appear correctly due to software incompatibilities and you should always check.

Once the text for the motion has been entered, **you must confirm the following:**

- All motions need to have been agreed by the LMC, so you will need to confirm this by ticking the first compulsory check box below the motion box
- You must also confirm in the second check box that motions are new and are not existing conference policy (by checking the [BMA database if necessary](#))

Once happy, click on the **'submit form'** button to submit the motion. If you have not entered any text or ticked the check boxes you will see an error message - use your web browser's 'back' button to return to the form and fix the problem indicated.

After a successful submission you will be presented with a screen that lists your motion(s) and offers a link to submit another motion such as in the following example:



If the email address held on your account is valid, you will also be sent a copy of the motion text you have submitted as confirmation. No other confirmation will be sent from Committee Services. **Please do not send motions via e-mail to the office.** If you fail to get a confirmation message please check with kday@bma.org.uk first as the motions may have been received, but the wrong email address received the confirmation.

Once you have completed all the motions you can either continue to browse the BMA website or you can log out using the 'Log out' link.

If you experience problems using the form, please contact kday@bma.org.uk.

The LMC Conference motions database will be closed at 12 noon on Friday 19 February 2021. No further motions will be accepted once the database is closed.

Please try to avoid submitting motions at the very end of this period as it potentially slows the system and those motions risk not being received before the deadline.

Competence, Composite or Compost: Take a look at your motions

In order to help LMCs getting their motions accepted to the Agenda, and to try to avoid the criticisms that the LMC Conference Agenda comprises a large number of composite motions, we have written some guidelines to help make sure that the motions you send to the Conference of UK LMCs are competent.

Above all, remember that if your motion is debated, it might be passed – and it will then form policy. **Anything that wouldn't work as policy doesn't work as a motion.**

Motions headings

First of all we would ask that you submit your motions under one of the following headings. If you are unsure about which heading to submit your motion then please use your best judgement and the Agenda Committee will review to see if they agree with where you have put it.

If you are really unsure about which heading to submit your motion under then there is a heading marked "Other". However, we would ask you to try to submit your motion under a heading, even if you're a bit unsure about it, as it does make the lives of the Agenda Committee and the secretariat much easier. The headings are:

How can we manage future demands:

- Maintaining access to GPs and their practice teams for the digitally excluded
- Responding to wants or needs - How do practices best mitigate against health inequalities?
- Primary/secondary care interface - Workload shift from acute sector into the community
- The post Covid consultation – What do we keep, what do we return to?
- Appraisal-lite? Peer support?
- Other

How do you create and maintain a workforce fit for the future:

- What is the role of the independent contractor model in new primary care structures – are partners an endangered species?
- Are additional roles in the primary care workforce reducing the workload burden?
- What roles do new GPs aspire to?
- The 'Covid' effect on the locum workforce
- How can we future-proof quality of training if GPs don't see the bread and butter?
- Other

What should the role of the GP post-COVID look like

- Urgent and emergency care
- Planned care and preventative medicine
- The Expert generalist of the community
- Continuity and trust in times of uncertainty
- Other

Clinical, prescribing and dispensing

Digital technology and data

General practice in a post COVID world: - Lessons learnt from pandemic and vaccinations

Medico-legal and indemnity

Pensions

Premises

Regulation and UK professional issues

The Post – Brexit Environment

Other

When writing your motions, please bear in mind the following points:

- **Is it new?** We need to best use the limited conference time. Consider current issues - what issues are new or have substantially changed? If the motion asks for something that has already been agreed, it will be marked as an 'A' motion and won't be debated. So please remember to focus your energy and valued expertise in writing motions that are innovative and can be debated. Prior to drafting a motion, please check all the existing policies in [the policy database](#) to make sure that it is not existing policy.
- **Is your motion for UK Conference?**
As this is a UK conference, please ensure that your motion is for the UK – any nation specific motions will be rejected and automatically placed in part two.
- **Is your motion didactic?**
Narrow, constrained, didactic motions telling GPC to take specific actions may run the risk of asking for things that are undeliverable or not within the power of the GPC to give. Be more inclusive in *your* approach, and we can be more inclusive in ours.
- **What should be done?**
Motions that include a proposal of **action** about a subject are far more useful in shaping policy, and therefore make better motions.
- **Write the motion, not the speech.** If you feel that GPC should negotiate a certain issue just say so - do not write 100 words arguing the subject and submit it as a motion.
- **Stick to the rules.** A motion should be one sentence, and there **cannot be more than five parts** to it. Motions must always begin with the phrase '**That conference.....**'.
- **"Grammar maketh man"**. Motions **must be** grammatically correct and unambiguous to be of any use. Please double check the motions for grammar, spelling and punctuation before submitting them, as technically the Agenda Committee have to use the motion as written.
- **Check the language.** Please ensure that the motion actually makes sense!
- **Please do not reference nation specific bodies** like NHS England or Health Boards, for example, as that will also likely lead to your motion being rejected.
- **Quote at your own risk!** Quotes run the risk of invalidating a motion if they contain any inaccuracy. Similarly, mentioning specific sums of money increases the risk of making a motion incompetent.

What makes an ideal motion?

Those motions which are pertinent, concise, well-constructed and concern a new and challenging issue, or include an attack on the status quo with minimal verbiage (and, possibly, those topped with a hint of humour!).

Although it might appear that we on the Agenda Committee love the look of our own well-crafted composites, we actually enjoy nothing more than heading a section of the conference agenda with a stonkingly good motion that **says it all and says it well.**

Appendix

Number of representatives to be appointed to attend the 2021 Annual Conferences of LMCs by each LMC

England

Avon	6	Lancashire Pennine	3
Barking, Dagenham & Havering	2	Leeds	4
Barnet	3	Leicestershire & Rutland	4
Barnsley	1	Lewisham	2
Bath & North East Somerset, Swindon & Wiltshire	6	Lincolnshire	3
Bedfordshire	3	Liverpool	3
Berkshire	6	Manchester	2
Bexley	1	Merton	1
Birmingham	6	Mid Mersey	3
Bolton	1	Morecambe Bay	2
Bradford & Airedale	5	Newcastle & North Tyneside	2
Brent	2	Newham	2
Bromley	1	Norfolk & Waveney	6
Buckinghamshire	4	North & North East Lincolnshire	1
Calderdale	1	North Essex	4
Cambridgeshire	5	North Staffordshire	2
Camden	3	North Yorkshire	5
Central Lancashire	3	Northamptonshire	3
Cheshire	4	Northumberland	2
City & Hackney	3	Nottinghamshire	5
Cleveland	3	Oxfordshire	5
Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	4	Redbridge	1
County Durham & Darlington	4	Rochdale & Bury	2
Coventry	2	Rotherham	1
Croydon	2	Salford & Trafford	3
Cumbria	2	Sandwell	2
Derbyshire	5	Sefton	1
Devon	8	Sheffield	4
Doncaster	1	Shropshire	3
Dorset	4	Solihull	1
Dudley	1	Somerset	4
Ealing, Hammersmith & Hounslow	5	South Essex	3
East Sussex	5	South Staffordshire	2
Enfield	2	Southwark	2
Gateshead & South Tyneside	2	Stockport	2
Gloucestershire	4	Suffolk	3
Greenwich	1	Surrey	6
Hampshire & Isle of Wight	10	Sunderland	1
Haringey	2	Sutton	1
Harrow	2	Tower Hamlets	2
Herefordshire	1	Wakefield	2
Hertfordshire	7	Walsall	1
Hillingdon	1	Waltham Forest	1
Hull and East Yorkshire	3	Wandsworth	2
Islington	2	Warwickshire	2

Kensington & Chelsea & Westminster	3	West Pennine	2
Kent	10	West Sussex	4
Kingston & Richmond	2	Wigan	2
Kirklees	1	Wirral	2
Lambeth	2	Wolverhampton	1
Lancashire Coastal	2	Worcestershire	3
Scotland		Wales	
Ayrshire & Arran	2	Bro Taf	4
Borders	1	Dyfed Powys	3
Dumfries & Galloway	1	Gwent	3
Fife	2	Morgannwg	3
Forth Valley	1	North Wales	4
Glasgow	8		
Grampian	4		
Highland	4	Northern Ireland	
Lanarkshire	3	Eastern	4
Lothian	6	Northern	3
Orkney	1	Southern	2
Shetland	1	Western	2
Tayside	3		
Western Isles	1		
		Total	365

Events Air

Instructions for completing the form

Individuals who are attending the conference should complete their own forms to ensure correct and up to date information is supplied, and your confidentiality, linked to GDPR, is upheld.

Please use the link from the letter, to open the registration form.

You will land on this page, using the tabs, please complete the information required.

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BMA

UK conference of LMCs 2021

Wednesday 12 and Thursday 13 May 2021 - Virtual

Contact Details

* Title

* First Name

* Last Name

* Email Address

* Verify Email Address

* Mobile

Work

Boxes with * are required and will not let you move forward if they are not completed

All information, including the agenda for the conference will be sent out by email. Please provide us with the best email address to ensure you have all the information needed up to and for the conference

Attendance

I will be attending the conference as:

- LMC representative
- LMC observer
- Observer
- Committee
- BMA staff

Please indicate in what capacity you will be attending the conference

Once you have indicated your selections, please click on next

Next

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Your LMC

Please indicate which LMC you are representing

LMC Representatives

* PLEASE SELECT
Bromley

Berkshire
Bexley
Birmingham
Bolton
Bradford & Airedale
Brent
Bromley

LMC Observers

* Please select

Avon
Barking, Dagenham & Havering
Barnet
Barnsley
Bath & North East Somerset, Swindon & Wiltshire
Bedfordshire
Berkshire

Committee

* Please select

Agenda Committee
GP trainees
GPC England
GPC Northern Ireland
GPC Scotland
GPC Wales
Sessional GPs

Next

Depending on how you are attending, using the drop-down menus, please indicate what LMC/ Committee you are representing.

Access requirements

Please let us know how we can make this event fully accessible to you. If you would like to discuss your access requirements in more detail, please contact the organisers, Karen Day and Kathryn Reece at info.lmconference@bma.org.uk

Access requirements

Back

Next

If you require any additional assistance, please let us know here.

BMA membership and ARM attendance

Please indicate here whether or not you are a BMA member.

BMA members can also be considered for a place at the BMA's Annual Representative Meeting. Please indicate here if you are absolutely sure you would like to attend the ARM. Please note that you must include your BMA membership number here to be considered for an ARM place.

I am a BMA member

I am not a BMA member

No, I do not wish to attend the ARM

Yes, I would like to attend the ARM

Contact Details

BMA membership number

If you want to attend the ARM you need to indicate whether you are a member of the BMA and click on yes, I would like to attend the ARM, you have to provide your membership number in order to continue. If you do not want to attend the ARM you still need to indicate your membership status and click on no, I do not wish to attend.

Consents

Photography

I agree to my participation in the England conference of LMCs being photographed or otherwise recorded and hereby grant the BMA and GPDF Ltd all consents necessary for the use of such material in all forms of media worldwide without limitation.

Photography

No I do not agree

Yes I agree

Back

Next

The UK conference of LMCs is webcast, linked to GDPR, we need to ask your permission. Please can you indicate if you agree to your participation in the conference.

Once you have provided all your information you will see a summary page, which will provide you with an overview of the form that will be submitted. If you need to go back to change anything, you can use the back button to go to the section you need to amend.

This is what your summary page will look like.

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BMA

85%

Summary

UK conference of LMCs 2021		Edit
Contact Details		Edit
TITLE Dr	FIRST NAME Kathryn	
LAST NAME Reece	EMAIL ADDRESS kreece@bma.org.uk	
MOBILE 07777777777	WORK	
Attendance		Edit
LMC representative		
Your LMC		Edit
LMC Representatives		Edit
Barking, Dagenham & Havering		

BMA membership and ARM attendance Edit

I AM NOT A BMA MEMBER ✓ NO, I DO NOT WISH TO ATTEND THE ARM ✓

Contact Details Edit

BMA MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Consents Edit

Photography Edit

YES I AGREE ✓

Total 0.00

Terms and Conditions

BMA and GPDF Ltd are joint data controllers of this event.

Your personal data will only be used for the purposes of administering this conference. For information on how the BMA uses your personal data, see our privacy policy. For information on how GPDF Ltd uses your data, please see the privacy policy.

You can see our terms and conditions of booking here.

* I agree to the terms and conditions of booking.

Back Submit

If you have any amendments or changes to make, use the back button, to return or edit buttons next to each section

Once you are happy with your completed form, you will be asked to accept the terms and conditions of the booking, which is a required field. Please read over the terms and conditions and click in the box *I accept the terms and conditions of the booking

This conference is jointly administered by the BMA and GPDF Ltd (joint data controllers). Your personal data will only be used for the purposes of administering this event.

Terms and Conditions

I accept the terms and conditions of booking.

* I accept the terms and conditions of booking

Back Submit

If you agree to the terms and conditions, please a tick in the box, by clicking in the box.

Once you have agreed to the terms and conditions, click on the submit button, which will be sent to the event organisers.

When you have submitted your form, you will receive a thank you message to confirm your form has been received.

Thank You

Thank you for submitting your application to attend the UK conference of LMCs.

You will be contacted if there are any questions about your application.

If you have any questions or require further information please contact Karen Day or Kathryn Reece at info.lmconference@bma.org.uk

The system will record your IP address, if you start an application and need to continue later, you may receive this message, it is better to use an incomplete registration to avoid any duplications.

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An incomplete registration was detected

Would you like to:
Use the incomplete registration
Or, restart this registration

Incomplete registration option

**If you require any further assistance, please contact the event organisers,
Karen Day and Kathryn Reece on info.lmconference@bma.org.uk**

Conference of UK LMC representatives – 12 and 13 May 2021

JOINT BMA and GPDF DEFAMATION STATEMENT

Members of the Conference of UK LMC representatives are asked to read the following statement and to act accordingly.

An individual making a public statement on behalf of the BMA, its GP Committee (including subcommittees) and/or GPDF needs to be aware of the potential pitfalls of the law of defamation. In general, a defamatory statement is one which

“tends to lower an individual’s reputation in the eyes of right thinking members of society, or which would cause him to be shunned or bring him into hatred, ridicule or contempt, or which tends to discredit him in his profession or trade.”

There are two forms of defamation - libel and slander. Libel is the publication in permanent form of a defamatory statement. Slander is its publication in transitory form. So, to give examples, typically slander is spoken unrecorded word, whereas libel includes the written form such as hard copy or electronic communications, but also spoken words that are recorded, for instance in video form, or even in a voice recording such as potentially on a voicemail. An individual can bring proceedings for libel in the absence of any proof of loss. Proceedings for slander, however, can only generally be brought if loss can be shown although there are limited exceptions such as the slander of an individual in his profession.

There are a number of defences to a claim of defamation these include:

- (a) Justification - being able to show that what was said is true
- (b) fair comment on a matter of public interest - the honest expression of opinion, and
- (c) privilege - a statement fairly made in the discharge of a public or private duty.

An action for defamation can only be brought in the High Court. Legal aid is not available and proceedings are notoriously expensive.

Where it is necessary to mention individuals or organisations, great care should be taken to ensure that no gratuitous or unsustainable comment is made, this being so whether the discussion is on or off the record. Great care must also be taken to ensure that where an issue regarding an individual or organisation is the subject of rumour, it is not given weight or authority by being publicised by the BMA or GPDF to the detriment of that individual or organisation’s reputation. Similarly unsubstantiated comment should not be made about individuals and organisations.

Internet Postings

There is a common misconception that because of the informal and accessible nature of the Internet, different rules apply. The position is, quite simply, that the author of material posted over the Internet is every bit as liable in defamation as the author of off-line material.

Publication of defamatory material takes place once it has been posted on the Internet. It is not necessary for an aggrieved person to prove that anyone has actually read the material. There is the added danger that the material can be accessed anywhere in the world enabling anybody who is aggrieved to sue in that country as well as here.

Website hosts may also be liable, along with the author, for publishing defamatory material if they

have been made aware of its presence on a website and have failed to remove it within a reasonable period of time. People who hide behind anonymous postings will find that the website hosts can be required to disclose the identity of the author.

Electronic Communications

Under the Data Protection Act (DPA) data subjects are entitled to request the disclosure of information held on them by the BMA or GPDF. The DPA extends not only to electronic files (including external and internal email correspondence and including activity tracking) but to some manual files as well. The BMA and GPDF are legally obliged to provide the information requested. To avoid the risk of a claim for defamation, it is extremely important that all recorded information relating to individuals is accurately and properly expressed. Anything which could be regarded as offensive, insulting and defamatory must be avoided unless approved by the BMA's Legal Department or other professional lawyers.

The best practical advice is that any reference to an individual or an organisation should be made in measured terms after a careful appraisal of the evidence available with legal advice being sought where appropriate. If this advice is followed there should be no difficulties with respect to defamation.

John Canning
Director of Operations, GPDF
GPDF

January 2021

Gareth Williams
Interim Director of Legal Services
Legal Department
British Medical Association
January 2021