

Dear Colleague

As you know, I have been asked to chair a task group to take forward the work to determine how we optimise the structure and function of the GPC – and its relationships with others – so that we will be effective in meeting present and future needs of those we represent.

The fact that there needs to be change is not disputed. There is increasing devolution both between and within all four nations and within England, in particular, a move to a much more local approach to the commissioning and provision of GP services. This is creating an additional burden for LMCs and there is a pressing need to give you more support for the work that you do.

There are also changes taking place within the BMA, as part of its transformation programme, which will have implications for the current roles of GPC staff.

Moreover, there is a pressing need to ensure that, at a time of massive pressures on GPs – both financial and in workload terms – the GPC demonstrates value for money. It is some considerable time since there were any changes to the GPC so the need for such a review is long overdue.

You will see from the attached Terms of Reference that the work of the group is very wide ranging and that we have a very tight timescale. Whilst I do not underestimate the task ahead, I am reassured that a large amount of work has already been undertaken and the group will be relying heavily on the output of various workshops, surveys and meetings.

Some of the detailed work – such as the membership of GPC and the role and function of subcommittees and the executive - will be undertaken by subcommittees or specific task-orientated groups.

I want to reassure you that I and the members of the task group are undertaking this work without any preconceptions – except that we are convinced that no change is not an option. We will not be producing a set of rigid recommendations but would intend to provide a detailed risk analysis of options for change.

Chief executive: Keith Ward

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Lastly, I want this process to be as open and transparent as possible and it is vital that you have an opportunity to feed your views into our deliberations. I'm sure that we will not achieve universal support for every suggestion that we make but I will feel we have failed if people believe that they have not had sufficient opportunity to express their views. With this in mind, please feel free to contribute any thoughts to the dedicated email address that has been set up gpcreview@bma.org.uk.

When Chaand asked me to chair this group I must admit to some initial reluctance to grasp this potential poisoned chalice! However, in addition to acknowledging that there is a pressing need for change, I do feel a sense of responsibility to help to ensure that we have the structures in place to deliver the best possible support for the GPs we represent in these challenging times.

I look forward to working with you.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hamish', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dr Hamish Meldrum