

## Lothian LMC AGM 2025

### Chair's Report

The last year has been a profoundly difficult one for General Practice and an extraordinarily busy one for Lothian LMC. We began the year on a precarious footing facing many challenges amid a difficult economic climate. There is no immediate respite on the horizon however there are signs of optimism beginning to emerge. This feeling is not rooted in hope but is derived from the critical importance of our role, our combined strength and the growing resolve being demonstrated by practices.

In September last year we saw a major change within the LMC as our former Chair, Dr Iain Morrison, was elected to Chair of SGPC. This change has reinvigorated the debate about General Practice funding and we have worked to support the SGPC calls to restore our core funding. At last year's Scottish LMC conference, Neil Grey announced £13.6 million of direct investment into General Practice. This sought to remedy previous sub-inflationary DDRB uplifts in 2022/23 and 23/24 and, although modest given the scale of our underfunding, is movement in the right direction.

The 2018 contract has failed to progress and the GP sustainability loan scheme has run out of money. Some parts of the contract have been effective but too often the story is one of partial and unreliable delivery which falls short of the contract's aspirations. The recent Audit Scotland report supports this view and it is clear that we cannot continue on our current path. Our national negotiators are in discussions with the government but whether that leads toward a revised contract or a new one is uncertain. In the meantime we will work with Board and HSCP colleagues to make the most cost effective use of our limited resources.

The SLA continues to present a major threat to many practices. We have lobbied MSP and raised the profile of the issue within the media. This has been effective and dovetailed nicely with work underway by SGPC on the reimbursement of non-staff costs for all practices ('Phase 2 light'). This led the Scottish Government to intervene and pause the planned April increase in the SLA charges for 6 months to explore this solution further. Locally we continue to work to support practices within the Estates SLWG and through the appeal process. As discussed at our recent Roadshow, we strongly recommend practices seeking legal advice before signing any contracts.

As we warned last year, the NHS Lothian 7% budget cuts have degraded services in Lothian and the shortfall often lands at the door of General Practice. A great deal of work has taken place to try and resolve or mitigate these issues as they arise. We have also seen the rapid growth of the private sector filling the void left by inadequate NHS services.

Our recent LMC Roadshow was very well attended and we promoted the existing BMA workload guidance and supplemented that with the new BMA business guidance. When taken together with the LMC interface and private providers guidance we have a powerful suite of options to help practices control their workload and take action to control their costs. This reductionist approach is not desirable but until the fundamental issues facing General Practice are resolved this is what we have. We strongly recommend practices review and consider enacting this advice.

The employers NI increase has not been resolved and we were disappointed by the direction taken with the Enhanced Service package this year. We remain unconvinced by the PCCO's modeling of

the package as cost neutral and will monitor carefully to determine if that is the case. We greatly valued the support of practices and LMC reps whose feedback helped to mitigate some of the negative parts of the original proposals.

While the net result of the last year is overall negative, there are growing signs of change and it is that which creates a sense of cautious optimism. The leadership changes at SGPC fall at a logical point to draw a line under the 2018 contract and move forward. The upcoming election presents an opportunity for scrutiny of the Government's track record. Such scrutiny will reveal the vast gulf between reality and rhetoric and highlight the failure of Government to deliver the changes it promised patients and GPs in 2018. Practices are increasingly pushing back against unfairness and this is being noticed at many levels and having an impact. Such action supports the work we are doing as an LMC and advances the case for change at a national level too.

It is an enormous privilege to represent you and I am immensely proud of the work of the whole LMC team and the wider General Practice community. General Practice is the foundation of the NHS and without it the whole organisation would fall apart. This can be a huge burden of responsibility but it is also a source of immense power if we can work together towards a common goal.

Dr Andrew Forder,  
Chair, Lothian LMC Ltd.  
April 2025