



Londonwide LMCs

The professional voice of London general practice

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Submission to Southwark Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to be included in the scrutiny process on Freedom Passes.

Local General Practitioners have a long history of involvement in, and cooperation with, the local authority, in areas where Health and Social Care overlap, such as Housing, Benefits, and Travel Passes. This has been facilitated by Southwark PCT (and its predecessor organisations) who have approved a small fee when information is provided or reports are written.

It is my understanding that a great many more reports have been needed than is usual in this current round of Freedom Pass renewals. The process got off to a bad start when fee claim forms were not included with the Freedom Pass questionnaires sent to GPs. When the relevant office was contacted, we were told that a fee was not payable; this was exacerbated by staff who allegedly told claimants that the delay in renewal was due to the GP refusing to fill in the form. This created delay and considerable frustration for claimants and GPs.

The Local Medical Committee clarified the issue with the PCT, who confirmed their willingness to fund the reports under the existing arrangements. The form itself is poorly drafted, with no obvious place to explain non-mobility related indications for a Freedom Pass. There is also a yes/no tick box on page 2 without a preceding question. This makes the form user unfriendly. The information in relation to walking requested, is unlikely to be readily available to GPs, except in the most obvious cases. This means that a request for the claimant to attend surgery is normally needed.

The above factors, in addition to the large volume of requests received by GPs, have no doubt contributed to the delays in the overall process, but the claim by the council that GPs were slow in responding I feel is a smoke screen for a poorly managed process.

General Practitioners remain committed to any scheme which benefits our patients.

Kind Regards

Dr Stewart Kay
Chair of Southwark Local Medical Committee

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