



10<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Dear Practices,

### CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN FIREARMS LICENSING

As you will be aware from the LMC's previous communications, the new firearms medical process in Thames Valley has been live now for just over a month. So far, the process is running smoothly across all three counties. This communication is in order to clarify the issue of conscientious objection due to queries the LMC has received.

BMA guidance makes it clear that the process of firearms licensing is in the public interest and refusal to engage with the process could place you at professional risk. However, the BMA also makes it clear that individual GPs have a right to conscientiously object to providing a report on the basis of their personal and individual religious or ethical beliefs. The GMC and Medical Defence Organisations cite specific criteria where such circumstances apply, and guidance on how to exercise your right to conscientious objection.

In order to protect constituents, the LMC has obtained a legal opinion on this matter. If you wish to exercise a conscientious objection to the holding of firearms then you should follow the advice below:

- You must only declare a conscientious objection where you legitimately hold such a personal belief for religious or ethical reasons – Falsely claiming to hold a conscientious objection is a probity issue
- You must make your patients aware of the conscientious objection in advance, and explain it to them. It must be clearly visible in areas such as practice literature, notice boards and on your website.
- You must not discriminate between patients, eg: by objecting to some but not to others
- You should assist the patient in finding an alternative colleague who can complete the process for them, and must not obstruct their ability to do so
- You may not have a blanket practice policy on objecting to the process – The GMC defines conscientious objection as an individually held personal belief

The legal view the LMC has obtained advises practices that deviating from the above advice places you at significant medicolegal and/or regulatory risk. We strongly advise practices to follow this guidance when exercising a conscientious objection, and in all other circumstances to comply with the medical process of firearms licensing which the LMC has negotiated with the police, in line with professional and statutory obligations.

The negotiated process has been designed to minimise workload, risk and time commitment to GPs whilst ensuring you are fairly remunerated for the work done. If you require any clarification on the process or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us in confidence at [ceo@bbolmc.co.uk](mailto:ceo@bbolmc.co.uk)

Kindest regards,



Dr. Matt Mayer  
Chief Executive Officer