

GPC guidance update on the patient survey - 5 June 2009

Guidance issued to date

- Letter dated 25.5.09 from Laurence Buckman, Chairman, General Practitioners Committee to all GPs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, giving [general guidance on the GP patient survey – QMAS and contract disputes](#).
- Equivalent letter from Dean Marshall, Chairman, Scottish General Practitioners Committee to all GPs in Scotland was emailed separately.
- [Template letter for practices](#) launching disputes following patient survey results. Equivalent letters for GPs practising in Scotland and Northern Ireland are also available.

Confidence intervals

A number of questions have been raised regarding the question of confidence intervals and a practice's patient survey results and whether these might be open to challenge.

All practices are advised to obtain and check the confidence intervals relating to the patient survey results. If these have not yet been provided to the practice already, the practice should request them from the PCO. This information will be published at the end of June but can be made available to individual practices before then.

PCOs have for each practice:

- total number of forms distributed and returned. Some patients have received more than one form, but any duplicate replies are removed from the analysis
- separately for PE7 and PE8, the **base number** of those who answered they had tried to see a GP quickly (PE7) or book ahead (PE8), **those who answered yes** that they were able to see a GP quickly (PE7) or book ahead (PE8), **the % achievement** and **the confidence interval**.

Regarding confidence intervals, for each practice population there is a proportion of people who would report they can see a GP quickly or book ahead. The population is sampled randomly, excluding children, and the sample size is varied between practices according to their size, age sex mix and the response rate from that particular practice last year. The number sent is calculated so that the practice results for each specific payment question have a very high probability of being within a given range of those which would be obtained if the whole relevant practice population had answered that question.

It has been agreed that for each payment question, there should be a 95% chance (confidence level) that the "true" result would be within 7% (confidence interval) of the measured result.

Within the results currently given to the PCO for payment purposes is the 95% confidence interval for each payment question. Where this is 7% or less the survey has performed as designed, where it is more it has not.

Practices whose confidence levels exceed 7% and who do not consider their results to be a reflection of their performance are advised to consider challenging their results using the disputes procedure information at the top of this update.