

Sessional GPs bulletin

By the GPC's sessional GPs subcommittee

April 2005

Who are we?

We used to be known as the non-principals subcommittee of the GPC. However, with the new GMS contract, the term "non-principal" became redundant.

The subcommittee still represents all salaried and freelance/locum GPs working throughout the UK, and works to protect your interests, particularly on contractual and pay issues. The current membership of the subcommittee is set out on the back page.

Elections to the subcommittee will be held shortly, and details of how to be involved in this are set out overleaf and in the accompanying letter. All salaried and freelance GPs are strongly encouraged to put themselves forward for nomination.

We also want to hear from you on any new issues that we should be considering and taking forward.



We are here to represent you.

Welcome

This bulletin is produced regularly to keep you up-to-date on issues concerning salaried and freelance/locum GPs and on the work of the GPC's sessional GPs subcommittee.

It has been a busy year so far (as you will see), and it looks as though it will continue to be.

Elections

From now on the subcommittee will be elected to serve for a two-year term. This is to allow members to gain experience and plan their commitments.

We are currently seeking nominations for the subcommittee. Nominations are sought from ALL salaried GPs and freelance/locum GPs in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Please note that members receive full reimbursement of their travel expenses as well as a payment for attending the meetings. **If you wish to put your name forward please complete the enclosed form and return by 12 noon on 13 May 2005.**

The election will be held in May/June.

Website – where to find relevant information

We have a specific section on the BMA website (www.bma.org.uk). This can be found under "general practitioners" and then by clicking on "salaried and freelance GPs". Model contracts for salaried GPs, retainer GPs and FCS GPs, as well as guidance notes and news specific to our group are contained here.

We would encourage you to become a registered user of the website. Details of how to apply are set out on the BMA home page (www.bma.org.uk).

Would you like to discuss GP issues with other doctors? If so then you may wish to post a question and/or respond to one of the debates on the BMA GP discussion forums. The GP discussion forums can be found under "forums" at the top of the BMA home page and then clicking on "general practitioner forums". You will see that there is a forum specifically for salaried and freelance/locum GPs.

Salaried and locum GP survey

In mid-April we will be surveying a sample of salaried and freelance/locum GPs with questions on pay and working terms and conditions. The aim of the survey is help with our evidence on salaried GP pay and working conditions. By taking the time to complete the questionnaire, you will be helping to improve your own working arrangements and/or those of your

colleagues. The higher the response rate, the better and more compelling the evidence will be.

If we do not have your current contact details then we cannot contact you – so please ensure that we have your correct details before mid-April. Please see the section on the back page on checking and updating your details.

We will also be undertaking a survey of GP practices to ask them about the benefits of employing a salaried GP, and if they do not employ a salaried GP then to find the reasons for this and the factors that would encourage them to do so. The aim is to use this evidence to help with our fight to improve the payments available for practices.

Salaried GPs: The changes that are needed

The minimum terms and conditions of employment for salaried GPs, introduced with the new GMS contract in April 2004, have proved to be a welcomed improvement. Salaried GPs employed by a GMS practice or Primary Care Organisation (PCO) since 1 April 2004 must at least be offered these minimum terms and conditions, which includes improved maternity and sick pay, and protected study time arrangements. A salaried GP's previous NHS service should also be taken into account in determining maternity and sick leave pay. Unfortunately, many salaried GPs seem to be unaware of their contractual entitlements. To try to improve awareness we produced a *Focus on salaried GPs* guidance note, and continue to publicise salaried GPs' rights in our bulletins. The *Focus on salaried GPs* guidance and the minimum employment terms and conditions for salaried GPs are available on the BMA website.

Individual expert advice on contractual issues is available to BMA members by emailing askbma@bma.org.uk or telephoning 0870 6060828.

There are a number of amendments to the minimum terms and conditions that we would like to see. The GPC negotiators, with our help, are campaigning for the minimum terms to apply to those GPs employed before April 2004 and for those employed by PMS practices. It is also important for the cost of maternity, sick, adoptive and paternity leave to be met by the PCO or from central funding, rather than by the practice. The GPC negotiators are currently discussing this with the Health Departments and NHS Employers (which works on behalf of the Health Departments and Government).

Salaried GP pay

The Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body (DDRB) this year recommended that salaried GPs' pay be increased by 3.225% from 1 April 2005. This means that the minimum salary that a full-time salaried GP working 37.5 hours a week (pro-rata for a part-time) employed by a nGMS practice or PCO on the minimum terms as outlined above is now £49,248. This figure is inadequate. We will be pressing for this to be significantly updated for next year, and hope that the results of our salaried GP survey will help us to achieve this.

All salaried GPs should ensure that they receive at least a 3.225% uplift to their pay this year.

Salaried GP pension contributions

As of 1 April 2004 new pension arrangements for the payments of employee and employer contributions to the NHS Pensions Agency came into force. PCOs are now responsible for pension record keeping, collecting scheme contributions for practice-employed GPs and forwarding these to the Pensions Agency. Practices need to inform the PCO of the agreed pensionable income for their salaried GPs.

Unfortunately we have heard that some PCOs have not been making the appropriate deductions from practices or sending the correct contributions to the NHS Pensions Agency. We therefore recommend that all salaried GPs should check their payslips and retain these as evidence of their contributions in case any discrepancies arise. We also recommend that you check your annual pension statement from the Pensions Agency (these are not sent to all staff automatically so you may need to request one). You may also wish to seek confirmation from your practice manager and PCO that you are being pensioned correctly and paying contributions on the correct sum.

We will be publishing guidance notes on pensions for sessional GPs in the near future. BMA members can seek advice on pension issues by emailing askbma@bma.org.uk or telephoning 0870 6060828.

Appraisal

We have recently produced a guidance note for salaried and freelance GPs on the appraisal funding available to them. This is available on the BMA website and is in addition to our more general appraisal guidance notes which are also available.

Salaried GPs must be allowed time to prepare for and undertake appraisal during their normal working hours and must not be out of pocket as a result of the process.

Freelance/locum GPs should receive a payment from the PCO for preparing and undertaking appraisal (although funding for freelance GPs in Scotland has not yet been agreed by the Scottish Executive Health Department). If the PCO refuses to pay you a reasonable amount to cover your lost income, please contact your LMC immediately. If an issue cannot be resolved locally with the PCO then the GPC office should be informed and this will be taken up centrally.

Tell your LMC (and the GPC office if necessary) of any problems that you experience.

FCS and retainer scheme model contract

Following our publication of a model flexible careers scheme (FCS) contract, we have recently revised our model GP retainer scheme contract of employment. This is based on the minimum terms and conditions for salaried GPs employed by a GMS practice or PCO since April 2004, and takes account of the specific requirements of the retainer scheme. Both the model FCS and the model retainer scheme contracts are available on the BMA website. We advise that these are read in conjunction with our *Focus on salaried GPs* and *Negotiating your salary* guidance notes, which are also available on the BMA website.

All employees with one year's continuous service with their current employer (or contractually agreed continuous service if with several employers) will have acquired full employment rights and may be entitled to compensation for unfair dismissal. We have heard rumours that some practices are considering dismissing their FCS and retainer scheme GPs when the funding to practices ends for the FCS after 3/4 years and for the retainer scheme normally after 5 years. Practices can avoid this by retaining the GP in an equivalent salaried position. We advise that, if you are facing dismissal or are dismissed for any reason, you should seek expert advice from the BMA (email: askbma@bma.org.uk or telephone 0870 6060828 BMA members only), LMC or independent legal advice.

New guidance: coming soon

We are currently working on the following guidance and will be issuing this over the next few months:

- Pensions for freelance/locum GPs
- Pensions for salaried GPs
- Representation on Local Medical Committees
- Job planning

Once finalised the guidance will be available on the BMA website. We are also revising slightly our *Focus on Salaried GPs* guidance.

Locum fees

There is an update on the work of the BMA locum fees working group on the salaried and freelance GP section of the BMA website.

The BMA used to be able to publish suggested fees for GP locum work. However, following a ruling by the Office of Fair Trading, this had to be withdrawn. We want to be able to produce clear and helpful guidance that complies with the OFT regulation, and this is what the BMA locum fees working group, with the lawyers, is currently working on.

LMC representation

Most LMCs represent salaried and freelance/locum GPs, or are amending their constitution to ensure that they do. It is important that the LMC is able to represent you, and we therefore encourage you to contact your LMC to find out about its work, the way in which it represents your interests, and how you can become involved. Contact details for your

LMC can be found at: <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Hubfindyourlmc>

How can you help us?

Your details

Please check that we have your correct contact details and work status. We need this so that we can send you election forms and to survey your views on important issues (which could ultimately help to improve your pay and conditions). You can do this by emailing membership@bma.org.uk, telephoning 020 7383 6642 or updating your details via the BMA website.

Completing our surveys

We cannot stress enough how important it is for us to receive your responses to questionnaires which we send out. As we have said above, we will shortly be undertaking a survey of salaried and freelance/locum GPs. This will be sent to a random sample of those on our database. If you receive this please do complete and return it.

Membership of the subcommittee 2004-05

Vicky Weeks (chairman) – a FCS GP in West London. She is also a GP tutor for salaried and freelance GPs at the London Deanery. She is particularly interested in representation and contract issues.

Mark Selman (joint deputy chairman) – a GP locum in Devon. He has particular interests in locum pay, representation and prescribing. He also deputy chairman of the NASGP council.

Beth McCarron-Nash (joint deputy chairman) – a salaried GP. She wishes to help improve the working lives of all GPs and ensure their views are represented.

Rebecca Viney – a FCS GP in central London to fit in with family commitments. She is also an Associate Director for salaried and freelance GP education at the London Deanery. She has a long-standing interest in making education and fair employment conditions accessible to all GPs.

Paula Wright – a GP tutor for Newcastle East and also GP tutor for sessional GPs across Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. Following a 2.5 year salaried post she has been working maternity locums since January 2003.

John Pope – a locum, based and working in Scotland. He is also a member of Scottish GPC.

Bashir Qureshi – a GP locum with wider interests in occupational medicine and public health medicine. He is a member of the RCGP council and also the NASGP council. He supports the principle of dealing with sessional GPs' issues in liaison with GP contractors.

Andrew Cole – a GP locum working in West Yorkshire, and former inner city principal. He is interested in promoting the rights of doctors as individuals to pursue any form of portfolio career.

Richard Vautrety (GPC negotiator responsible for salaried and locum GP issues) – a GP and LMC secretary in Leeds.

Chaand Nagpaul (GPC appointed member) – a GP working in Middlesex and a member of the subcommittee for a number of years.

Julie Goodway and Fleur Conn provide the secretariat for the subcommittee.

If you have any questions on any of the subjects covered in this bulletin, please contact the GPC office:

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