



Guest blog: how can the new GP Retention Scheme help you and your colleagues

Our Medical Director Dr Vicky Weeks looks at the new GP Retention Scheme, which she helped negotiate as a member of the BMA's Sessional GPs' subcommittee.

Overworked? Exhausted and can't get that work-life balance right? Thinking of Leaving? Before taking that final step you should look at the new GP Retention Scheme.

This new scheme has been developed as part of the 10-point workforce plan initiatives. Building on the principles of the old retainer scheme, but with significant differences and enhanced flexibilities, and was made possible by close working between BMA, NHS England and Health Education England (HEE) scheme leads.

Why we needed a new GP Retention Scheme

Simply, we have a workforce crisis. We know from various surveys and research that the peak leaving age for both male and female GPs is 55-59, with a second peak for female GPs between 35-39. The most recent study from Exeter University (Emily Fletcher et al, BMJ open April 12, 2017) reported that age is highly predictive of a GP's intention to permanently quit direct patient care and this intention to quit was independent of either being a partner, salaried GP, locum or gender.

Further, 69% of the current GP trainee workforce are female, and this group have indicated intentions to take career breaks, with the difficulties of returning to clinical practice these can create. This represents a dreadful waste of resources, not only in terms of investment, but also in the skills and expertise that these GPs can bring to the workforce in the ever-changing landscape of general practice.

The new scheme's aims

The new scheme tries to address the problem of retaining GPs by focusing on the support and flexibility that GPs may need at the various stages in their career. These needs could be due to:

Personal reasons, such as caring responsibilities or health

GPs considering retirement or require greater flexibility to undertake other work either within or outside general practice

When a 'regular' part time role does not meet the doctor's needs for greater flexibility, for example, annualised hours

The opportunity to maintain a commitment in clinical practice is strengthened with continued support, tailored opportunities for professional development for the GPs. And, importantly, being in practice prevents isolation. Returner GPs (RGP) are salaried GPs in a practice, (using the BMA/RGP salaried model contract) and part of the application process and continued membership of the scheme is supported by robust job planning. All of this is underpinned by increased funding, both to practices in recognition of the important supportive role they play (£76.92 per clinical session up to a maximum of 4 sessions pw) and to the RGP as a professional expenses supplement (£1000 per clinical session also up to a maximum of 4 sessions pw) paid via the practice.

Ongoing development

Setting up the scheme is not the end but the beginning, and the scheme will be closely monitored to ensure that it supports GPs and meets their needs. I believe that we now have a scheme that can do what it says on the tin: retain GPs in general practice. You now have a choice so look at the guidance.

NHS England Guidance

BMA Guidance

BMA FAQs

Webinar – Thursday 11 May 18.00 - 19.30

Speakers:

Vicky Weeks, Deputy Workforce Policy Lead, BMA

EdPoulter, Program Delivery Manager, GP Retention, NHS England

Naureen Bhatti, Head of School GP, North Central and East London, Health Education England

Participants will receive a presentation from the speakers followed by questions, comments and discussion. If you are unable to attend but would like to pose a question, please email the BMA's LMC queries inbox and it will be relayed to the speakers. The webinar will also be recorded and available on the BMA website. If you would like to attend the webinar please email info.lmcqueries@bma.org.uk in order to register your place.