

Supporting GPs and practice staff

The contract recognises that attracting GPs into the profession and retaining existing family doctors must be a top priority.

There will be a new package of measures to improve GPs' working lives, including a new career structure, protected time for skills development, and more family friendly working practices. An enhanced seniority scheme and improved pension arrangements will reward long-serving GPs.

The contract also aims to support and reward other practice staff, such as nurses and practice managers, to maximise their contribution to improving patient care.

How will the contract affect GPs' careers?

GPs have suffered from the lack of a recognised career pathway. The contract will underpin a modular approach to planning GP careers, enabling GPs to develop their clinical experience, develop special interests and take on clinical leadership roles.

This will be supported by flexible approaches in all four countries such as career breaks, sabbaticals, returners schemes, flexible career schemes and a reduced clinical commitment in return for PCO or professional work.

To maximise opportunities for GPs to develop their careers, funding for protected development time has been built into the global sum. The new protected time arrangements will also support appraisal, which will be based on recent agreements between the GPC and the Department of Health and its equivalents in the devolved administrations across the UK.

How will other practice staff be supported?

Organisational standards in the quality framework will reward practices for ensuring

that their employment standards comply with good human resources practice.

The contract will bring new career opportunities for practice staff, including nurses, by extending their roles and responsibilities and by facilitating skill mix.

The contract will also encourage an expanded role for practice management in primary care, supported by the development of a new competency framework for practice management. This is designed to help develop individuals' competencies and ensure that practices have access to the skills they need.

Does the global sum mean that practices no longer have to apply to PCOs for increases in their workforce?

Yes. Practices are funded on the basis of the costs of delivering essential and additional services. Practices have the discretion to decide the staffing complement needed to deliver these services within the amount of money they have been allocated.

What about salaried GPs?

The global sum will give practices and PCOs the funding to appoint salaried staff. PCO and practice salaried GPs will work under national terms and conditions set out in supporting documentation which PCOs and practices will use as the basis for their employment of GPs.

How will long-serving GPs be rewarded?

The existing seniority payment scheme will be improved to reward experience. The new scheme will deliver a 30 per cent increase in total resources over current spend by 2005/06. The scheme will be based on years of NHS reckonable service.

What about pensions?

If the profession accepts the new contract there will be significant improvements in GPs' pensions.

The definition of pensionable pay will be broadened to include all NHS income, including locum work and any work undertaken for PCOs. This change will provide new incentives for GPs to deliver a wider range of NHS services.

In line with good human resource management practice, three new pension flexibilities will be introduced to facilitate portfolio careers for

GPs who may wish to work at some stage as salaried GPs, independent contractors or in other NHS services.

What will be the benefits of the new proposals?

- New measures to attract GPs into the profession and to retain existing family doctors
- A better, more flexible career structure to give GPs real choices throughout their working lives
- New opportunities for practice staff to develop their skills
- A better pension deal.

Finding out more

This series of factsheets provides more information about the contract's key proposals. For a full copy of the contract, the other factsheets in this series or more detailed information, visit www.nhsconfed.org/gmscontract

