

Advisory notice: Consultant, consultant clinical academic and SAS doctor contracts during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, and the immense demands it is placing upon the NHS, represents an unprecedented challenge to this country.

The British Medical Association (BMA) and NHS Employers would like to express their support and thanks to all consultants, consultant clinical academics and SAS doctors for their work during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Alongside other healthcare workers across the country, over the past few weeks senior clinicians have demonstrated extraordinary levels of commitment and a willingness to go above and beyond usual expectations. In the weeks and months to come to ensure that these efforts remain sustainable, it will be of paramount importance that staff do not work in a manner that compromises their own health or safety or the health and safety of their patients. In particular, rest and time to recover both during and between resident on-call and day and night shifts is essential to enable the workforce to face some of the challenges to the very best of their ability.


In order to continue to support the effort to respond to the increased numbers of inpatients in hospital, as well as to cover for colleagues being off sick or self-isolating, we are aware that consultants, consultant clinical academics and SAS doctors, often at short notice, have been asked to take on additional or new clinical duties which have not always been in line with their previously agreed job plans.

In practice, this has meant that on a temporary basis many working patterns, rotas, out-of-hours work and supporting professional activity (SPA) time have had to change. Such arrangements should continue for no longer than is necessary to respond to the extraordinary clinical demands posed by the current emergency and we strongly recommend that maintenance of these temporary working patterns are reviewed collaboratively and in a spirit of partnership wherever they have been introduced.

To ensure that any temporary working arrangements deployed during the pandemic continue for no longer than necessary, the BMA and NHS Employers will together conduct monthly reviews to monitor the use and operation of these emergency arrangements. Following each monthly review, the BMA and NHS Employers will confirm their positions as to whether emergency arrangements should continue to apply.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, individual doctors may have found and continue to find themselves unable to work a particular rota, or to take on certain clinical responsibilities. These individual circumstances should continue to be managed sensitively and on a case-by-case basis to identify and address any potential barriers and to allow individual doctors to remain able to contribute as and when they are able to.

Whilst recognising the need for flexibility and adaptation to an evolving situation, the BMA and NHS Employers wish to make it clear that consultants, consultant clinical academics and SAS doctors agreeing to work in new ways is on a temporary basis and without any variation to their nationally and individually agreed contracts and associated terms and conditions of service, which will continue to apply.



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