Sessional GPs Subcommittee

ARM report 2021

Representation

The Sessional GPs Committee has continued to look at representation within the BMA and in relation to GPC UK. The committee has begun to investigate the possibility of becoming a separate branch of practice. We are working with GPC UK, the Organisation Committee and the Representative Body to find a solution which fosters an equitable and collaborative relationship between the Sessional GPs and Committee and the GPC.

Committee workplan

In anticipation of the next session, the committee’s GPC priorities workplan has been developed and covers key areas for the policy leads in the next session. We will be focussing on the possibility of becoming a separate branch of practice, flexible working, appraisal, retained GPs, performers list reviews, contract passporting, working conditions, occupational health, remote working and prescribing for locums.

Enhanced Shared Parental Leave

After years of lobbying, the Sessional GPs Committee finally received confirmation that employers in England (GMS and some PMS practices) will be offering enhanced shared parental leave and pay to salaried GPs. This change will bring us in line with junior doctors and Agenda for Change staff who already have these entitlements.

Shared parental leave allows for up to 50 weeks of the 52 weeks maternity leave, to be shared between the parents. Eligible parents are also able to share up to 37 weeks of statutory shared parental pay (equivalent of statutory maternity pay). The Sessional GPs Committee has been working closely with the GPC to secure this and has curated guidance to enable eligible salaried GPs to request ESPL be included in their contracts.

CCAS

The Sessional GPs Committee has been working with a 111 CCAS provider, following NHSE’s closure of the service, to create a ‘gold standard’ zero-hours contract for GPs who will be re-employed by the resurrected service. The new contract will capture the benefits of the salaried contract, on a flexible basis which is the model adopted by most 111/OOH providers.

This work has resulted in accepted amendments to the contract to include improved sick pay entitlements, occupational maternity and paternity pay, and appraisal and CPD allowances.

The committee is looking to use this experience to complete similar work in other settings and introduce ‘gold standard’ contracts wherever they are lacking.

Newsletter

The Sessional GPs Committee has launched it’s ‘Know your Rights’ campaign in its monthly newsletter. The first edition focused on parental leave, following the successful adoption of ESPL by GMS and some PMS practices in England. The second newsletter in the campaign focused on pay, following the DDRB announcement in July. The upcoming newsletter will focus on working conditions for sessional and salaried GPs and will empower doctors to better recognise and address problems in their workplace.

IT

The Sessional GPs Committee has continued to address the problems members, particularly locum GPs, have experienced accessing the correct and necessary IT equipment needed to embark in remote working during the pandemic. The greatest barrier to providing all sessional GPs with the appropriate IT equipment is funding, which neither NHSE nor the CCG’s will take responsibility for. Consistent reluctance by the relevant bodies on this issue has made progress slow. In July, the committee received confirmation that a purchase order had been made to enable sessional GPs remote accessibility to Office 365 systems.

Education, Training and Workforce

The Sessional GPs Committee has been looking at improving the GP Retention Scheme by conducting a survey of retained GPs and producing guidance and a webinar. This has tied in with similar work which aims to tackle the barriers sessional GPs face when to returning to work after a career break. In addition, the Sessional GPs Committee has produced guidance for locums working via banks or platforms, working conditions, remote working and will soon publish guidance for GPs working in other non-standard settings, such as out of hours and 111.

Pensions

In collaboration with the Pensions Committee, we have risen to many challenges so far, and we still face an extremely tough road ahead, but we believe we are taking steps towards a fairer pensions system for GPs across the UK.

We have been working on the "McCloud" remedy and its implications and a number of Government consultations on the NHS Pension Scheme including changes to the contribution tiers.

We continue to fight for GPs to have access to an accurate, up-to-date pension record. We were made aware that the NHS BSA had reported NHS England to the pensions regulator, as NHS BSA had not received certain up-to-date information from PCSE that was required for GP pension calculations. We asked NHS BSA for a copy of this communication, however they would not disclose this to us fully and we have since complained to the Information Commissioner’s Office, who are investigating.

We also have concerns regarding PCSE’s new online GP Payments and Pensions portal, which went live on 1 June, which aims to provide practices and GPs in England with access to a range of services to help manage their payments and pensions administration online.  
We ran a survey for GPs who primarily work in England to provide their feedback on their experiences of using the new portal to manage their pensions administration. The results indicated that GPs have experienced multiple issues with the system.  We would like to assure you that we are holding PCSE to account.

For further information on the broader Pension work please see the report from the Pension Committee.