Dear GP Training Programme Director,

Industrial Action and time out of training (TOOT)

With the ongoing industrial action being taken by doctors in training and ARCP panels either ongoing or set to convene shortly, BMA members have raised concerns with us about the possibility that doctors who have demonstrated the competencies for their CCT could be required to carry out additional time in training due to having taken industrial action, as well as the possibility that trainees nearing the end of ST1 and ST2 could be held back. We believe that these would be improper outcomes in a competency-based qualification, and we are writing to all GP Training Programme Directors to try to avoid the unnecessary impact that extensions would have on newly qualified GPs, trainees and training practices.

In recently published guidance, the RCGP have stated that “the indicative time which should be spent in the training programme is 36 months (1095 days) wte”. We understand that this has been highlighted in response to the withdrawal of legislative duration requirements when the UK left the EU, however this does not overturn the clear principle that the CCT is awarded based on assessment of competence. Training cannot simultaneously be both competence-based and time-based.

While the Gold Guide (4.87) states time-based thresholds for TOOT leading to an ARCP panel review of the CCT date, there is no reason that this should automatically lead to a training extension for doctors who have breached this threshold because of industrial action but have otherwise demonstrated the necessary competencies. Not only would these extensions be frustrating for these doctors and hamper their ability to take up jobs but given the numbers of GP trainees involved in industrial action, it could lead to considerable capacity issues for training practices.

In a similar way, for trainees who are coming towards the end of ST1 and ST2 and have demonstrated the expected competencies, we would not expect to see them being held
back from progressing into the next segment of their training or having their CCT date delayed.

We believe it is important that there is consistency in how TOOT issues relating to industrial action are managed by ARCP panels and that the approach taken is both pragmatic and focuses on the crucial principle of competency-based progression.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sarah Matthews
GPC UK Education & Training Policy Lead

Dr David M. Smith
Chair GP Trainees Committee

cc: Colin Melville, Medical Director and Director of Education and Standards, GMC

Fiona Sellens, Chair of COGPED

Kamila Hawthorne, Chair of RCGP Council