

Sessional GPs Newsletter



www.bma.org.uk

for salaried and locum/freelance GPs

Winter 2010

WELCOME

Our aim is to keep you up to date with the broad range of new and ongoing issues affecting sessional GPs, and the hard work that the Sessional GPs subcommittee undertakes on your behalf. To improve our communication of developments in the four nations, and the work being done by the subcommittee we will now be issuing this newsletter on a **quarterly** basis.

We hope that you find this latest update useful, and would welcome your feedback and suggestions for the newsletter. Please send any feedback to Will Jones at wjones@bma.org.uk

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to any sessional GP colleagues in your practice, or locally.

REPRESENTATION

What is the Sessional GPs subcommittee?

The Sessional GPs subcommittee represents **all** of the salaried, locum, retainer and sessional OOH GPs throughout the UK. It is able to do this because it is elected democratically on a biennial basis by all sessional GPs regardless of their BMA membership status. The Sessional GPs subcommittee is part of the General Practitioners Committee (GPC) of the BMA and is supported by a dedicated GPC negotiator.

The membership of the Sessional GPs subcommittee

In the 2009 national elections the following members were elected to the subcommittee for the next two sessions:

Katie Bramall
Andrew Cole
Bashir Qureshi
Mark Selman
Ian Thompson
Vicky Weeks
Lydia West
Paula Wright

Recently Ian Thompson became a practice partner and had to step down from the subcommittee. Christine Cormack, based in Perth, is the new devolved nations' representative.

Vicky Weeks was elected Chairman and **Mark Selman** was elected Deputy Chairman of the subcommittee.

The subcommittee's membership includes further representatives who provide one of the many links with the negotiators and GPC:

Laurence Buckman (ex officio, GPC Chairman)
Beth McCarron-Nash (ex officio, GPC Negotiator)
Fay Wilson (GPC representative)

The subcommittee also benefits from the valuable input of sessional GP representatives from the devolved nations' general practitioners committees on the dedicated Sessional GP subcommittee discussion list server.

These representatives are:

Oak Aung-Kyi (GPC Wales)
Mary Anne Burrow (Scottish General Practitioners Committee)
Ursula Brennan and Margaret O'Brien (Northern Ireland General Practitioners Committee)

This issue covers the following topics:

Representation

- What is the Sessional GPs subcommittee?
- Membership of the subcommittee
- Interview with Vicky Weeks, Chairman of the Sessional GPs subcommittee
- Sessional GP Representation working group

Contractual and Professional Issues

- Revalidation update
- Prescribing numbers
- Locum GPs – Death in service payments
- Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body – evidence for salaried GPs

Devolved Nations

- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

Making the most of BMA membership

- Advice and Support
- Salaried GPs' Handbook
- Become a BMA member



Interview with Vicky Weeks, Chairman of the Sessional GPs subcommittee

Congratulations on your re-election as Chairman of the Sessional GPs subcommittee. What will be the main areas of work for the subcommittee over the next two years?

The work of the subcommittee over the next two years will be focused on several important areas: revalidation, representation, and terms and conditions of employment. With respect to revalidation there is still much more work to be done to ensure that the processes, in particular criteria and standards of evidence are equitable for all GPs. The pilots are on-going, but we still need models, for example of Multi-Source Feedback and Patient Satisfaction Questionnaires, that are appropriate for locum GPs and GPs who work out-of-hours and in walk in centres.

Turning attention to terms and conditions of employment for salaried GPs, it is important that we maintain the **salaried GP model contract** and ensure that it continues to act as a benchmark, promoting its use by PMS and APMS employers. We will continue to work to represent salaried GP issues at the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body, and promote adequate pay and salary uplifts for all employed GPs. The GP Retainer Scheme is an important means for retaining GPs in the workforce and we are looking to see how we can support the Retainer Scheme for the future. We are also looking at what we can do to support locum GPs and the subcommittee will be working on guidance and advice for locum GPs that is similar in concept to the handbook produced for salaried GPs.

Representation both at the BMA and at LMCs has always been a significant issue for sessional GPs. Several members of the Sessional GP subcommittee are part of the Sessional GP Representation working group, which is exploring how sessional GPs can engage successfully and increase their representation and have their voice heard both locally and nationally.

Is there anything that the subcommittee could strive to do better in the next two years?

The subcommittee has done some significant work over the previous years and continues to work hard to represent

sessional GPs' best interests. However it has become evident that what we have not been so good at is communicating what we do and our future challenges. As part of this work we are moving our newsletter production to quarterly, and liaising with the BMA web team as to how we can make the website more accessible. We also need to explore how we link with other organisations where and when we have common interests.

What do you think will be the major professional challenges that sessional GPs will have to face in the next few months and over the next two years?

Recent workforce figures confirm that the numbers of sessional GPs in the workforce is continuing to increase. With the continuing lack of partnership availability, established GPs and newly qualifying GPs coming into the workforce are more likely to have a career in general practice as either a salaried or locum GP. What we need are systems in place to address the need for fair terms and conditions of employment provided by PMS and APMS as well as GMS providers. There also needs to be support for career development and leadership opportunities for sessional GPs.

Another challenge will be revalidation. We will need to ensure that whatever process is finally put in place, that it is equitable, reasonable and proportionate for all GPs, and does not disadvantage any one group of GPs. Further challenges have arisen from pandemic flu. We need to make sure that death in service benefit for locum GPs at the time of a declared pandemic is properly secured.

What can you tell us about your usual experience of being the Chairman of the Sessional GPs subcommittee?

A key factor for me is working with other members of the subcommittee to plan and execute our business plan for the coming session and to try and work strategically for the coming years ahead. This includes working on documents, list server discussions as well as the more usual and traditional meetings. The subcommittee is not a committee in isolation, and so that we can represent the best interests of sessional GPs it is important to collaboratively work with



other subcommittees with which we have common interests, such as Education, Training and Workforce, and Representation. It also requires close working with our negotiator, who is a sessional GP herself. It can be a huge amount of work. The support of the deputy chair, the rest of the subcommittee and our secretariat, in other words working as a team, which is so important in making the work possible.

The BMA provides a multitude of services that are of great use to sessional GP members. Which services would you recommend in particular to sessional GPs?

I would strongly recommend that sessional GPs who are members of the BMA make use of the contract checking service and contact **our advisers** when they need employment advice. The contract checking service in particular is very useful for making sure that you are being offered at least your statutory entitlements and that the proposed contract meets your professional needs. There are also our various resources on-line, such as the **salaried GPs' handbook, job planning guidance, in-house performance review advice**, and the **guidance for negotiating fees**. Besides that, the subcommittee and the BMA are always looking to improve what we offer sessional GPs, so we are keen to hear new ideas.

Sessional GP Representation working group & Sessional GP Survey

Last year, the GPC set up a Sessional GP Representation working group to review the arrangements for the representation of sessional GPs within the GPC and BMA, and at a local level – for example, through LMCs and regional BMA committees.

The group has now met four times and will be meeting on a monthly basis during 2010. As part of its work, the working group is planning a consultation aimed at gauging the opinions of grassroots sessional GPs.

In the next month, the working group will be sending out a survey to sessional GPs on issues relating to their contracts, their work as a sessional GP and how they are represented at a national and local level.

If you are a sessional GP BMA member, please look out for the survey and return it as soon as possible in the envelope provided. The results of the survey will be vitally important in informing the work of the working group.

The group is also looking at how LMCs currently engage with sessional GPs – with the aim of producing a set of best practice procedures that we will encourage all LMCs to implement where appropriate.

There will be further updates regarding the work of the working group in future newsletters, the weekly BMA newsletter and GPC News.



The working group see this as a great opportunity to listen and learn. For more details about this, and to listen to an interview with Vicky Weeks on this subject, please visit the [BMA website](#).

CONTRACTUAL AND PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

Revalidation update

The Sessional GPs subcommittee is working in an attempt to ensure that revalidation is fit for purpose for all GPs, regardless of their contractual status. The subcommittee and the GPC have representation at a number of high level groups, including the RCGP's revalidation stakeholder group, and put the sessional GP agenda forward at every opportunity.

Guide to Revalidation of General Practitioners:

Following the publication of version 1.0 of the RCGP's *Guide to the Revalidation of General Practitioners*, the GPC wrote to the RCGP, and made clear a number of concerns for sessional GPs, including:

- Possible problems for both salaried and locum GPs in using multi-source feedback due to the lack of appropriate tools, particularly for locum GPs and the impact of time spent in a practice and relationships with employers.

- The lack of availability of individual prescribing data,
- Concerns around locum GPs being able to engage successfully with significant event audits, clinical audit cycles or any complaint processes.

The Sessional GPs subcommittee and GPC support the development of revalidation but will continue to work with the RCGP to try and ensure an equitable process for salaried and locum GPs. Version 3.0 of the Guide has now been published on the [RCGP website](#).

Sessional GP revalidation pilot:

The RCGP has launched a pilot to examine the challenges posed by revalidation for sessional doctors, particularly for peripatetic locum GPs. The pilot is being undertaken in partnership with the GMC, is funded by the Revalidation Support Team and is taking place in the Northern Deanery. Vicky Weeks, the Chairman of the Sessional

GPs subcommittee, has been very much involved in the setting up of this pilot through membership of its steering group.

The challenges to be examined by the pilot include:

- The collection of audit information
- Reporting of formal complaints
- Undertaking multi-source feedback

GPs involved in the pilot will have taken part in regular annual appraisals and be in a position to assess their readiness to collect the range of evidence detailed in the RCGP's Guide to Revalidation. The pilot will explore the difficulties and assess the feasibility of evidence gathering for sessional GPs. It will also recommend the best revalidation portfolio for locum GPs. The final report is due in April 2010.

Scotland

Mary Anne Burrow has replaced Ian Thompson as the sessional GP representative on the Scottish General Practitioners Committee (SGPC) for the 2009/10 and 2010/11 sessions.

Since 2004 GP Appraisal has been a requirement for admission to the Performers List in Scotland. In January 2009, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (QIS) published its *External Quality Assurance National Report on the GP Appraisal Process*, which flagged up that whilst the majority of GP Providers in Scotland had been appraised, a substantially lower percentage of sessional GPs had been. SGPC has been aware of this issue for some time, and has expressed its strong concerns to the Scottish government regarding the lack of adequate sessional GP appraisal in Scotland and the potential risk this has created for patients. SGPC advised all sessional GPs across Scotland to request that their host NHS Board arrange for them to be appraised and provide them with appropriate payment to support their participation in the process. SGPC received a number of very helpful responses from sessional doctors highlighting the difficulties that they experienced. SGPC

will continue to press the Scottish Government on this issue. Updates on progress will be provided in future newsletters.

In September 2009 the Scottish Government issued a letter outlining the arrangements for pandemic flu and death in service payments to locum GPs. This letter is in line with the letter issued by the English Department of Health. Please contact ajenkins@bma.org.uk for a copy of this letter.

Last year concerns were highlighted to SGPC that locum GPs were not being provided with access to the NHS Scotland e-library database. SGPC has since confirmed with the Programme Director for Knowledge Management that locum GPs, like other contractors with the NHS, are fully entitled to passwords for the NHS Scotland e-Library. If you have experienced any problems with accessing this resource, please contact ajenkins@bma.org.uk



Northern Ireland

Ursula Brennan and Margaret O'Brien are sessional GP representatives on NIGPC. In 2010 they will aim to keep the continuing shortage of advertised permanent GP partnership posts high on the agenda for NIGPC to address as well as ensuring professional isolation for sessional GPs, which is also a significant concern, is looked at. This follows the Northern Ireland LMC conference passing a motion that supported a reduction of professional isolation experienced by sessional GPs.

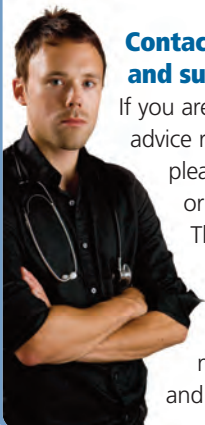
The representatives will be working to address the continued lack of a co-ordinated communication flows from the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), which is affecting day-to-day working and governance. The HSCB wrote to all sessional GPs on the performers list in October 2009 requesting email addresses for the purposes of contacting them. However, the database will only be for the

purposes of contacting sessional GPs to assist GP surgeries experiencing high levels of absenteeism during the H1N1 pandemic.

There has been a slow response from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) to clarify the issue of death-in-service payment arrangements for sessional GPs. The Northern Ireland representatives will be working with the other UK representatives to achieve a rapid resolution of this issue.

However, the DHSSPS has continued to provide financial support to expand the Northern Ireland Sessional Doctors Association website (NISDA) to help with education, clinical governance and appraisal preparation. NISDA is a voluntary organisation which has provided educational meetings for Sessional Doctors.

Making the most of BMA membership



Contact the BMA for advice and support

If you are a BMA member, and require advice relating to your employment, please telephone **0300 123 123 3** or e-mail support@bma.org.uk. The BMA offers individual representation and advice, including a contract checking service, advice relating to maternity/paternity, sick leave and redundancy.

Salaried GPs' handbook

The salaried GPs' handbook, for salaried GPs and their employers, provides detailed guidance on employment terms and conditions, legal entitlements, the 'model' salaried GP contract, available employment contracts and additional contractual benefits. It is a benefit of BMA membership.

For a copy of the handbook, call **0300 123 123 3** or visit the **website**.



Become a BMA member

Join today and ensure you have our full support when you need it. www.bma.org.uk/join call **0300 123 123 3**