Chapter 22
GP retainer scheme

Sections 1 to 4 are relevant to salaried GPs and their employers. Section 5 is relevant to GP employers.

1. Details of the scheme

1.1 Background
The GP retainer scheme provides a salaried GP post but with a difference. It was introduced to enable doctors, who would otherwise have been unable to find a suitable post, to continue to develop their skills and to remain up to date. It therefore combines service with continuing professional development.

The scheme is monitored by the deanery. For example, both the practice and the GP retinee must have been approved by the deanery for the GP retainer scheme.

1.2 Length of the scheme
GPs are able to stay on the scheme for five years, with the possibility of this being extended by the deanery.

2. Contractual matters

2.1 Contract of employment
A practice is normally the employer of the GP retinee, although a PCO could be the employer.

The employer is responsible for issuing a written statement of particulars, a written contract of employment and for paying the GP retinee’s salary.

As GP retainees are employed, they should be offered the model salaried GP contract (see chapter 6) if the employer is a GMS practice or PCO. Alternatively, the BMA GP retainer contract may be used as this provides terms and conditions that are no less favourable than the model salaried GP contract and is tailored to the specific needs of the
scheme. While the BMA GP retainer contract is not obligatory, many PCOs insist that it is used in order for the practice employer to receive the retainer fee (see section 5 below). It is also good practice for non-GMS employers to use either of these contracts.

The BMA GP retainer contract can be found at appendix G. As noted above it is tailored to the scheme, and does differ slightly from the model salaried GP contract.

2.2 Salary
Where a GP retainee is employed by a GMS practice or PCO, the minimum salary should be equivalent to that set out and explained in chapter 7, section 1. For those not so employed, it is recommended that this minimum is a good benchmark. For all GP retainees, there is no maximum salary limit.

In addition to the salary paid by the practice, each retainee receives a nominal payment per annum from the deanery (Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Authority in Northern Ireland (NIMDTA)) which contributes towards GMC registration and medical indemnity cover.

2.3 Hours
In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, doctors on the retainer scheme can work between one and four sessions a week for a practice. In addition, in Northern Ireland GP retainees can work an additional two sessions in areas such as family planning of social security with the approval of NIMDTA.

In Scotland, GP retainees can work between two and four sessions a week.

In all countries, retainees can increase their sessions in a given week within reason (normally up to six sessions per week), usually provided that they do not work more than 52 sessions per three-month period. A session for these purposes (ie in terms of the maximum amount that can be worked under the scheme) is defined as three and a half hours in England and Scotland, and as four hours and 10 minutes in Wales and Northern Ireland.
3. Education

3.1 Educational time
Within the sessions set out above, a retaine in England and Scotland must undertake 25 hours of education time per year. In addition to this, in England they must receive three hours (spread throughout the year) of educational supervision by the named practice educational supervisor.

In Wales, eight sessions (33 hours and 20 minutes) of education time per year is recommended.

In Northern Ireland the GP retainees must undertake 28 hours of educational sessions per year, three of which should be based at the practice itself.

3.2 Educational funding
In England and Scotland, the retaine should receive travel and subsistence for the 25 hours of education plus a contribution towards the course fees. This is subject to prior approval by the deanery. In Wales, the deanery will pay up to £400 for course fees per year (as of 2008-09). For GP retainees in Northern Ireland, NIMDTA should be contacted to clarify the educational funding available.

In addition during the educational sessions, the retainees must receive their usual salary from the practice.

3.3 Educational support
There must be a named educational supervisor in the practice, and this person should provide the necessary educational sessions (as explained in section 3.1 above).

It is vital that an adequate induction programme is provided. During the scheme help and advice must also be available to the retaine from a named clinical supervisor during the clinical/service sessions.
4. Work outside of the practice
GP retainees cannot work as a locum while on the scheme. However, it is possible to undertake non-primary medical services outside of the practice subject to the deanery’s approval. This external work could include, for example, family planning or clinical assistant work.

5. Payment to the practice

5.1 Continuation of funding
In return for employing the retainee and agreeing to provide the educational support, a practice will receive a notional payment from the PCO (currently for 2008-09 at £59.18) for each session that the retainee is employed for, including when the retainee is on:
- an educational session
- maternity or adoptive leave – payment is made during the first 26 weeks
- paternity leave – for up to two weeks
- parental leave
- emergency leave
- leave for a pressing personal or family reason – where the practice and PCT agree that the absence is necessary and unavoidable
- sick leave – for a time agreed by the practice and the PCO
- annual leave – equivalent to six weeks in England, Wales and Scotland, and four weeks in Northern Ireland.

5.2 Locum reimbursement to the practice
In addition to the above payment, when a GP retainee is on maternity, adoptive, paternity or sick leave, the practice may be eligible for locum reimbursement.

5.2.1 Locum reimbursement available to a GMS practice
Under paragraph 9 of the Statement of Financial Entitlements (SFE) a GMS practice is entitled to apply to its PCO for locum reimbursement while its GP retainee (a performer) is on maternity, adoptive, paternity leave or sick leave. For the amounts of reimbursement available and how to obtain the funding, see the relevant chapters of this handbook relating to each type of leave.
5.2.2 Locum reimbursement available to non-GMS practices

It is expected that PMS practices will have the benefit of locum reimbursement included in their contract for services with the PCO. It is important for the practice to check the contract, including the extent and level of locum reimbursement available. Practices should contact the BMA for advice if the contract with the PCO is unclear.

6. Further information

For additional details about the retainer scheme, please contact your PCO and/or deanery. For guidance on contractual matters, BMA members should contact the BMA.