

## Glasgow LMC supplementary information to BMA guidance on locum agreements

Sessional GPs undertaking locum work are self-employed GPs and any contract for their services, the agreement, reached between practice and Sessional GP should reflect that.

Problems arise because of

1. Diary errors, due to poor systems on the part of practices or Sessional GP or human error
2. Different expectations of work to be undertaken in a locum session
3. Failure to agree financial terms, fee or payment arrangements, in advance

The BMA recommends that written agreements setting out terms of employment are used when Sessional GPs are engaged for locum work and provides guidance on what this agreement should cover. See the link <http://bma.org.uk/practical-support-at-work/contracts/sessional-gps/locum-agreements-in-general-practice> or the LMC website in the library section for Sessional GPs under Locum GPs.

To assist Sessional GPs and practices to capture and share relevant information when booking locum work GLMC has developed a template based on this guidance which may be amended and used by Sessional GPs and practices. This template is also stored on GLMC website in the Locum GP area of the Sessional GP library folder.

### Notes to template:

- 1) All doctors have a duty to practice safely and within their competency<sup>1</sup>. This means that Sessional GPs may vary in the work they are prepared to undertake dependent upon their experience and knowledge of the local area and practice systems. Locum agreements encourage explicit clarification of the duties that that Sessional GP has, and has not, agreed to undertake. The agreement should detail whether for instance the GP has agreed to handle docman workflow and results not arising from their own consultations. Safe participation in workflow requires instruction in practice systems and adequate allocated time. It is important that having developed an agreement all receptionists and practice staff on duty are made aware of the agreed responsibilities of the GP undertaking the locum.
- 2) In agreeing workload practices and Sessional GPs should allow adequate time at the end of a session to complete paperwork such as referrals arising from consultations and to allow the GP to make any necessary communications to the practice regarding concerns or follow up of patients required.

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<sup>1</sup> Good Medical Practice GMC 2013 Domain 1: Knowledge Skills and Performance Para 14 You must recognise and work within the limits of your competence.

- 3) Fees must be negotiated between the practice and Sessional GP on an individual basis. There is no “locally agreed” fee rate as this would contravene anti-competition legislation. The BMA guidance referred to above sets out factors which can be taken into account when negotiating fees. This guidance suggests that either a time based or workload based calculation may be used when the details of a locum session have been agreed. The agreement should also detail the period within which the fee is to be paid and cancellation arrangements.
- 4) The agreement details both practice and Sessional GP responsibilities. For the practice this includes provision of relevant superannuation paperwork, agreeing cancellation terms and arrangements to terminate an ongoing locum arrangement. Sessional GPs will be aware that withdrawing from a booked locum session causes practices considerable difficulty, especially at holiday times, and are reminded that professionalism requires that booked locum work should be honoured whenever possible. The locum agreement may detail the responsibilities of a Sessional GP where they wish to withdraw from a booked locum session.
- 5) It is appreciated that completing a locum agreement for the first time will take considerably longer than agreeing a 4 hour session with no further detail. However, in addition to avoiding many of the difficulties detailed at the start of this document, it is hoped that doing so will encourage practices and Sessional GPs to communicate more and thereby gain better understanding of each other’s needs. This should allow stronger relationships to form with more emphasis on Sessional GPs returning to work in the same group of practices.
- 6) Information gathered in a recent survey of Sessional GPs suggested that they value familiarity with practices and being made to feel part of the wider practice team and would be more likely to undertake extra locum sessions for practices to which they felt some attachment. GLMC intends to take several steps to assist in improving the interface between Sessional GPs and practices in GGC and this guidance and template are the first of those steps.