

Employing a salaried GP - Notes for Guidance.

These notes are intended to help colleagues who are thinking of employing a salaried GP (SGP). They should be read in conjunction with the GPC publication “*Contractual arrangements for salaried GPs*” (July 2001) and the *Model Contract for GP Assistants* (July 1999), both of which are available on the BMA website or from the LMC office.

The GPC is currently working on a model contract for salaried GPs and when this is available I hope these notes will be superfluous.

The Contract

I suggest that the model contract for assistants can be tweaked to suit salaried GPs by changing “assistant” to salaried practitioner.

Additional sentences may need to be inserted depending on what is needed from the salaried GP. For example if the SGP is carrying out full commitments including OOH and visits para. 6 should have an additional sentence something like:

- You are required to undertake a reasonable share of home visits in proportion to your share of the total practice workload, and to undertake up to [x%] of the total sessions contributed by the practice to the [y] cooperative.

There might also be a sentence about providing emergency cover for the absent partner through sickness and holidays.

I suggest that Para. 16 (Professional registration) should have a sentence added after the first sentence:

- You are also required by the time you start the job to be a member of the Supplementary List of a Primary Care Organisation.

Salary

At present there is no national scale for salaried GPs, although there are plans to introduce one if the new GMS contract is approved. You will need to negotiate a suitable package in accordance with market forces. However the GPC guidance on salaried partners has important advice on being fair to the employee.

As a guide to the range of salaries paid the current BMJ contains an advert for a civilian medical practitioner (mainly occupational health) at a range of £36,890 to £57,519, and an advert for a salaried partner for £70,000 p.a.

It is likely that the upper end of such a range would be for a SGP doing the full range of GP work including weekends and OOH. Lower salaries would be paid to a SGP who only works from the surgery, has no management responsibility, and does not work weekends, bank holidays or unsocial hours.

The assistant’s contract starts by referring to payments per session. However the duties required of a salaried GP may require more involvement with the practice organisation than is usual for assistants, so it is probably better to alter the emphasis of Para. 5 and start with an annual salary, adjusted pro rata if part-time.

Additional Payments

Think about the extra costs that a SGP may have:

- Defence union and professional organisation subscriptions have to be paid. Most employers pay for those subscriptions that are essential, such as defence society and GMC. If the SGP is part-time and carries out other work elsewhere it would be reasonable to pay pro rata, or to include the subs in the overall salary. You may wish to encourage the SGP to affiliate to the LMC by offering to pay the non-principals’ levy (currently £25).

- It is likely that most salaried GPs will now wish to continue their membership of the NHS superannuation scheme. If they do then they should have deducted from their salary 7% of their earnings. As an employer you are responsible for contributions over and above the employees contribution. Currently this is 7% of earnings.
- Car expenses incurred, as a direct consequence of the work should be paid. (This does not include the costs of travel to work). Since most applicants are likely to have their own car a mileage payment for travel on practice duties may be better than providing a car. Generally speaking it is only to the employer's advantage to provide a car if the mileage done by the employee exceeds 10,000 p.a.
- I suggest that you adopt the LMC/PCT mileage rate at the time, so that you will then be spared the periodic hassle of renegotiating the rate.
- Since most applicants have a telephone you need only pay the actual cost of calls. If, however, the SGP is on call from home it could be helpful to agree to pay the cost of line rental. If you do it is reasonable to expect that the line is then not out of action for hours by a member of the family surfing the net!

Golden Payments

Provided the salaried partner is eligible "Golden Hellos" and "Golden Handcuffs" are recoverable from the PCT, so it is in your interests to offer these where appropriate. If the salaried practitioner leaves general practice within two years you would be expected "to cooperate" with the PCT's efforts to recover the money, although you would not yourself be liable to repay some or all of the money.

I am happy to discuss individual matters about the employment of a salaried GP with any Gloucestershire principal, and to advise on a draft contract on request.

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