

Timing: Wednesday 25 March

New GP return to practice scheme launched nationally today

A new programme to get doctors into General Practice has been launched today with the backing of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), NHS England, Health Education England and the BMA. The Induction and Refresher scheme is designed to support GPs who have previously been in practice to introduce them back into the workforce.

It will provide an opportunity for GPs who have previously been on the GMC Register and on the NHS England National Performers List (NPL), to safely return to General Practice after a career break, raising a family or time spent working abroad. It also supports the safe introduction of overseas GPs who have qualified outside the UK and have no previous NHS experience.

The new scheme will standardise pre-existing schemes providing a consistent single point of contact, via the GP National Recruitment Office, to guide doctors through the system. Doctors will also be able to apply from overseas, before they either return or come to the UK. The scheme will offer a bursary of £2,300 per month and participants will be given a supervised placement in general practice. The placements will be tailored to the needs of doctors to ensure they have the confidence and knowledge needed to be a GP.

Professor Wendy Reid, Medical Director and Director of Education and Quality for Health Education England, said:

“The GP Workforce 10 point plan sets out what we aim to achieve to ensure improvements in general practice to deliver a better service for patients.

“We are pleased to announce this first step from the plan, working collaboratively with our partners, to make it simpler for GPs to return to practice.

“This programme removes some of the barriers seen before for doctors, who have had a career break or worked overseas to be supported to return to work in general practice.

“The scheme aims to bridge the gap between the skills and experience that doctors have had, and those that are required for safe and effective primary care practice in the NHS in England. It also recognises the different learning needs of those returning from work

overseas over those from a career break, and those who are seeking orientation and adjustment to English primary care.

This scheme will mean a more equitable and easier career route within a highly rewarding part of the NHS.”

Rosamond Roughton, Director for NHS Commissioning at NHS England said:

“We need a strong GP workforce to achieve the vision for primary care set out in the NHS Five Year Forward View and this new scheme will be a key element of that.

It will mean that doctors returning to practice, after working abroad, taking a career break or having a family will now have a clearer route and support to do so.”

Dr Maureen Baker, Chair of the Royal College of GPs, said:

“It costs nearly £250,000 to train a GP so it is an absolute travesty for patients and a huge waste of public money if we then lose them to the profession as a result of red tape and outdated regulations.

“Getting skilled and experienced GPs back into the profession as quickly and seamlessly as possible after a career break has long been a priority for the College and for me personally, so the proposals announced today are very encouraging.

“GPs take career breaks for a number of reasons, perhaps to work abroad or to raise their family, and in many cases they want to return to general practice in the UK - but they are deterred by the red tape and bureaucratic hoops that they have to jump through.

“We are confident that if people know that the process is to be simplified and streamlined across the country, there will be many more trained GPs who would consider returning to frontline patient care in the UK, helping to ease the intense workforce and workload pressures currently facing general practice.

“Over 90% of patient contacts within the NHS are dealt with in general practice and GPs across the UK are working harder than ever to manage increasing patient demand with decreasing resources – including a severe shortage of GPs.

“We urgently need to make it easier for trained GPs who have taken a career break – or been practising abroad - to return to providing patient care.

“The RCGP estimates that we need 10,000 more GPs across the UK by 2020 to cope with the growing demand of an ageing and growing population. We need to do whatever we can

to deliver the 3Rs - 'recruit, retain and return' – and attract as many GPs as possible, so we have a workforce that can deliver the care our patients need and deserve now and in the future.

“Today’s announcement is a welcome step in the right direction.”

Dr Chaand Nagpaul, BMA GP committee chair, said:

“The announcement of a new, properly funded induction and refresher scheme is a positive step forward that will be good news for doctors who are seeking a route back into full time or part time work as a GP.

It will be helpful to those who have had to take career breaks, particularly those who have taken time away to raise a family or decided to gain experience by working abroad. With a workforce that is increasingly looking for flexibility, this has the potential to be extremely beneficial and will hopefully overcome the huge bureaucratic and time consuming obstacles that currently prevent perfectly competent GPs from returning to work in the UK

“At a time when there is undoubted evidence of a significant shortage of GPs and problems with recruitment and retention, it is encouraging that NHSE has worked with the BMA’s GPs committee, Health Education England and RCGP to put this new scheme in place.”

The new scheme is part of the [GP workforce 10 point action plan](#), launched by Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), NHS England, Health Education England and the BMA in January this year to expand the GP workforce. It included £10million NHS England funding to kick start the initiatives in the plan and builds on existing work by Health Education England alongside NHS England and the RCGP to get an additional 4,900 trained GPs by 2020 (compared with 2012).

For more information see [website](#)

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Editor’s notes

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Notes for editors: HEE was established on 28 June 2012, working as a shadow Special Health Authority from 1 October 2012. It took on its full operational responsibilities from 1 April 2013. It has five national functions:

- providing national leadership on planning and developing the healthcare and public health workforce;
- promoting high quality education and training that is responsive to the changing needs of patients and local communities, including responsibility for ensuring the effective delivery of important national functions such as medical trainee recruitment;
- ensuring security of supply of the health and public health workforce;
- appointing and supporting the development of LETBs; and
- allocating and accounting for NHS education and training resources and the outcomes achieved.

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