

## **The GP Retainer Scheme in the North East**

### **A summary by Dr Paula Wright, Adviser on Sessional GPs, Health Education North East 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014**

#### **Purpose and benefits:**

The scheme provides opportunities to retain doctors in the GP workforce through a part-time commitment. For many GPs these posts provide an important means to sustain their input to general practice whilst they have well founded reasons to limit their working hours. The post should offer the opportunity to take part in all the primary care team activities (e.g. team meetings and education) not just to deliver a clinical service. The educational emphasis of the scheme means that the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) entitlement must be delivered in full as well as weekly protected mentoring (by the educational supervisor or other team members). Retainer doctors are employed by a practice on a model retainer contract based on the national model salaried contract, for 5 years. The doctor also receives £310 towards professional subscriptions.

#### **Educational element**

Retainers receive protected time for CPD (pro-rata according to their contract subject to a minimum of 28 hours/annum) and also receive weekly mentoring from their educational supervisor.

#### **Who it is for**

The scheme is intended for doctors with well-founded reasons for needing to work part-time, which generally means caring for dependents or ill health.

#### **Career development and retention in the workforce**

Retainer doctors are encouraged to develop (or retain) additional skills whilst on the scheme, such as appraiser skills, medical student teaching, a clinical assistant role for example in family planning, benefits tribunals work, etc. Some retainers do a limited amount of Out of hours work to retain urgent care skills, or work limited sessions in Accident and emergency. The Northern region retainer scheme exit data indicates excellent retention rates for retainers after the end of the scheme with most staying on at their retainer practice in a salaried capacity or as a partner.

#### **How to apply**

GPs apply using the application form available on the HENE retainer page. Applications are submitted to Paula Wright ([pfwright@doctors.org.uk](mailto:pfwright@doctors.org.uk)) HENE Adviser on Sessional GPs, 8 weeks in advance of the starting date. The applicant and the practice should read the retainer scheme handbook in full before completing the application.

## Restrictions

The retainer doctor's contract will be for a minimum of 1 weekly session and a maximum of 4. The scheme permits a limited amount of non-GP work (requests dealt with on a case by case basis) but no GP locums except for the last 6 months of the scheme. The doctor must be on a performers list, and registered with the GMC and must arrange their Medical defence cover (which is usually reduced for scheme members). They must engage in annual appraisal.

## Cost effectiveness

Recent cost effectiveness reviews of the retainer and refresher scheme indicate that the funding spent on these schemes are well worth while in terms of the retention of doctors when compared with the costs of training new GPs. Workforce data indicates that *the peak age for females leaving the MPL was 35 years, while for males it was 57 years. Sixty per cent of the female leavers were below the age of 45 years, compared to 28% of males.*

## Gains to practice

The practice receives £59 per session or £3,000 per annual contracted session for the duration of the scheme (5 years). The practice benefits from the opportunity of recruiting a doctor who they can invest in and develop to become a full member of the team. Retainers accrue employment rights (unfair dismissal etc) in the same way as other practice employees (further details available in [Focus on salaried GPs](#) by GPC on the BMA website and in the [Retainer Scheme handbook](#)). They usually stay on as salaried doctors or partners and extend their hours and roles as they progress through the scheme and after the scheme.

## Further details about the scheme

<http://www.northerndeanery.nhs.uk/NorthernDeanery/primary-care/continuing-practice/retainer-scheme/retainer-scheme>

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16 April 2014

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