Funding additional GP locum sessions: your questions answered

For GP practices in England | Updated 26 October 2026

From 1 October 2026, the practice-level GP reimbursement scheme can help practices fund eligible additional sessions delivered by GP locums, including self-employed GPs who invoice the practice. The funding is intended to increase GP appointment capacity, not simply pay for locum work already taking place.

The essentials

- Eligible additional locum sessions must take place between 1 October 2026 and 31 March 2027.
- Eligible self-employed and agency GP locums do not need an employment contract with the practice.
- The practice can claim eligible costs up to £78.41 per hour (£79.84 where London weighting applies), subject to its overall funding allocation.
- Claims go through CQRS Local. Your ICB manages access, approval and evidence requirements.

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Which sessions qualify?

1. Can we claim for self-employed GP locums?

Yes. Self-employed and agency GP locums can qualify without an employment contract with the practice, provided the scheme rules are met. Read the full NHS England guidance and CQRS FAQs.

The funding is for additional GP sessions, not simply for existing work. Check eligibility against the scheme rules before claiming.

2. What if the GP already works for us?

Possibly. The scheme covers an increase in the GP's sessions, not sessions they were already providing. The SFE requires annualised sessions to rise from fewer than nine to no more than nine per week. If the GP works at several practices, the rules do not clearly explain how this limit is applied. Please check the SFE and seek advice from your ICB before claiming.

If the GP works irregular hours, NHS England advises practices to take a reasonable approach, keep evidence of the previous pattern and confirm that the claimed work adds capacity. The SFE does not prescribe a calculation method. Check uncertain cases with your ICB.

3. Can we use the scheme for holiday or sickness cover?

Not simply to replace an absent GP. The scheme is designed to increase capacity; separate SFE arrangements cover certain types of GP absence. The same expenditure must not be reimbursed twice under different schemes.

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4. Do any other practice-level conditions apply?

If your practice has more than 3,500 registered patients per fully qualified GP, contact your ICB before participating so that the relevant review and approval process can take place. Check your entitlement and remaining funding with your ICB before making financial commitments.

How much can we claim?

5. What does the funding pay for?

There are two separate limits:

Hourly limit: for an eligible additional locum session, you can claim the lower of the practice's actual eligible cost per hour and £78.41 (£79.84 where London weighting applies).

Overall allocation: your practice has a finite allocation for this GP reimbursement scheme, calculated as £4.57 multiplied by its adjusted patient population at 1 January 2026, adjusted for any approved transfers. This same allocation may also be used for eligible salaried GP costs, so money already claimed reduces what remains.

Worked example - four eligible hours outside London

- Fee agreed with the locum: 4 × £90 = £360.00
- Maximum reimbursement: 4 × £78.41 = £313.64
- Difference paid by the practice: £46.36

This example assumes all four hours qualify, enough funding remains and there are no separate employer on-costs. The £78.41 figure is a reimbursement ceiling, not a rule about what a self-employed locum can charge.

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6. What about NHS pension and National Insurance contributions?

Claims are capped at the lower of the actual eligible hourly cost or £78.41 (£79.84 in London). For salaried GPs, actual cost includes employer NI and pension contributions. For locums, check with your ICB how any employer costs actually incurred should be evidenced. The hourly cap still applies.

Finding and booking a GP

7. How can LocumDeck help?

LocumDeck is free for practices to join and use. Practices can see local GP locums' availability and agreed rates, book directly, and manage sessions with GPs they already know. Locums set their own rates and terms. NASGP does not add an agency commission or booking charge to the practice; where an Instant Book fee applies, the locum pays it separately to NASGP.

Practices can register at https://nasgp.circle.so/practices . You can also encourage GP locums who already work with your practice to make their availability visible, helping build a larger local pool.

Making your claim

8. What records should we keep?

NASGP recommends keeping a simple record of:

- The GP's previous working pattern and what has increased
- The dates and hours of each additional session
- Booking confirmations, agreed rates and invoices
- Any employer pension or NI costs actually incurred

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- Relevant eligibility advice or approvals from your ICB

Your ICB decides which evidence it requires. Keep relevant engagement records, invoices and evidence of the additional sessions. Ask your ICB what it needs before submitting a claim. LocumDeck can help organise records, but it does not determine eligibility or submit CQRS claims.

9. How do we submit a claim?

Use the Practice Level GP Reimbursement service in CQRS Local. Your ICB manages onboarding, user access, evidence requirements and approval of claims. The updated CQRS FAQ specifically addresses invoice-based locums and one-off shifts.

For irregular sessions, checking and claiming the actual hours each month is usually more appropriate than relying on a copied recurring claim. CQRS also provides instructions for entering one-off shifts. Follow your ICB's local claim deadlines and submit the required declarations and evidence. Under the SFE, the claim and declaration must be made within three months after the end of the relevant month.

How to handle irregular and multi-practice work

NHS England has confirmed that there is no prescribed method for calculating previous irregular sessions, and the SFE does not expressly settle the nine-session limit across multiple practices. If either applies, check the official rules and speak to your ICB before relying on reimbursement.

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Your next step

Identify the extra GP sessions your practice needs, confirm eligibility and the remaining allocation with your ICB, then agree the work and rate directly with the GP. Register your practice with LocumDeck if you would like to organise direct bookings and invoices.

This practical guide is not a guarantee that any particular session will qualify. The current SFE provisions and your ICB's commissioning and claim requirements determine entitlement and payment.

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