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BMA issues medical locum rate card for junior doctors

02 February 2023 Gemma Lynch

In November we brought you news that the BMA was advising all NHS / HSCNI consultants to ensure extra-contractual work is paid at the BMA minimum recommended rate and to decline offers of extra-contractual work that doesn't value them appropriately.

On 30 January 2023, the BMA issued a locum rate card for junior doctors which suggests that they ask for minimum rates of between £60 and £150 per hour depending upon level of qualification and shift covered. The rates are valid until April 2023.

Junior doctors are able to negotiate their own rates of pay and are not obligated to undertake locum work if they are not satisfied with the rate of pay offered. Currently rates of pay are a matter for agreement between NHS trusts and the junior doctors. However, the rate card sets out the minimum rate the BMA suggest a junior doctor should ask for to work a locum shift for a NHS trust. Therefore, the BMA advice could impact upon the rates that junior doctors are now prepared to accept for locum work, which is likely to be considerably higher than what trusts have previously paid.

If the BMA's advice is followed and junior doctors refuse to work for less than the amounts in the rate card, this will effectively set a national minimum rate. Trusts will then be faced with either agreeing to pay these minimum rates (potentially leading to increased costs) or face a shortage of locum doctors.

Whilst NHS Employers have not issued any guidance specifically in relation to the junior doctors' rate card, their position in respect of the consultants' rate card is that "pay rates for non-contractual work need to be determined by the local employer, in light of their own affordability constraints." They also encourage employers to work collaboratively "to minimise competition between organisations." Furthermore, NHS Employers chief executive Danny Mortimer was quoted in the HSJ as saying "the BMA's approach to unilaterally setting rate cards for medical staff is not welcomed by our members". However, he also notes that "health leaders recognise that other areas of concern including pensions taxation and the growing pay dispute between trade unions and the government need resolving."

The new rate card comes at a time when junior doctors are currently being balloted over whether to take strike action in relation to the current pay deal offered by the government. Further, the BMA plan to update the rates "at least annually in April based on RPI" to ensure it tracks inflation. Therefore, given the current climate and impact on inflation, the rate could be set to increase further in the near future.

A copy of the current rate card for junior doctors can be found below.

Click here to view →
https://d3e6tmgg461bic.cloudfront.net/Pictures/780xany/1/7/2/3059172_ratecard_363547.png

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