

BMA advises consultants not to accept less than the BMA minimum rate card for extra-contractual work

The BMA is 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.

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The decision to work overtime or additional hours and other activity worked beyond the standard contract, such as waiting list initiatives, rests entirely with the consultant. At present there is a wide variation around the country regarding the amounts paid for this work with it largely being a matter of agreement between Trusts and their consultants. The BMA advice could impact upon the rates that consultants are now prepared to accept for such work if the previously agreed rates are lower than those set out in the BMA minimum rate card.

If consultants across all Trusts follow the BMA's advice and refuse to work for less than the amounts in the BMA 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 consultants refusing to undertake extra-contractual work which will no doubt impact on the Trusts performance.

The current dispute over rate cards could also cause difficulties for employers in the event junior doctors vote in favour of strike action. Historically consultants have been asked to provide cover for more junior staff which they have been willing to do. However as this is an extra contractual arrangement which they can either agree or refuse, they may be less inclined to agree going forward due to the disagreement over rates. This could therefore significantly impact the employer's ability to put effective contingencies in place to cover any action by junior doctors.

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