

Freelance GP Support Teams

PCT based management network, support and retention for peripatetic medical professionals



Local GPs Key to Freelance GP Support

"Freelance GP Support Teams" (FGPSTs) are the new concept for the integration of Freelance GPs into the structures and processes of the NHS. And this time, it's the Freelance GPs who are in the driving seat.

The NASGP would like every PCT in the UK to begin developing a FGPST within the next 2 years. The mechanisms and processes of clinical governance, appraisal and revalidation are all as equally applicable to Freelance GPs as any other GP. And with PCTs struggling to enfranchise Freelance GPs (FGPs) into these systems, now is the time to encapsulate the new skills and confidence of FGPs into a positive, structured and accountable framework to deliver healthcare to all patients across a PCT.

Enabling Freelance GPs to work in Teams

What no one seems to have worked out is that it is the enormous number of Freelance GPs in the UK—in excess of 10,000 fully qualified GPs working 1.6 million sessions a year providing 36 million consultations—who are "unofficially" covering their colleagues in substantive posts.

And what FGPSTs do is simply make this "official" - local Freelance GPs not only working in "managed environments" but actually contributing towards its clinical processes.

To retain these GPs, we need to ensure they have ownership within their local area.

An "Intelligent" Manpower Solution

Freelance GPs working as locums tend to be spread very thinly across a large number of practices and PCTs. This means that one practice manager can spend hours trying to contact several dozen different locums to cover a small number of sessions, eventually filling the vacant clinical sessions with an array of unknown GPs.

However, with FGPSTs, the SGPLO can "intelligently" place the right locum—familiar with local clinical processes, up-to-date and highly satisfied—to the right job.

Why should a practice any longer have to struggle for hours to fill several slots with several unfamiliar locums when their patients can have the option of one familiar locum providing a more continual service?!

Team Managers to co-ordinate Freelance GPs

At the heart of each FGPST will be the team manager. Their role will be similar to that of a typical practice manager. They will facilitate the non-clinical aspects of the FGP's job, such as co-ordinating group or individual based audit, manpower placement (making sure practices have a locum when they need one!), ensuring the members are up to date with their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and appraisal, and participating in local clinical governance processes.

And rather than the traditional approach of keeping FGPs at arm's length when it comes to involving local GPs in improving local services, FGPSTs will allow FGPs to be fully enfranchised into the structures and processes of their local area.

Each team of Freelance will also have its own Clinical Director—invariably one of its members. They are responsible for many of the group's clinical governance mechanisms and take responsibility for quality issues within the group.

So where do you go from here?

These Freelance GP teams can be established by any interested party. A PCT, a GP practice, a commercial agency or groups of individual Freelance GPs.

See our website at www.nasgp.org.uk/sgpst for further information. Alternatively, NASGP can provide a consultancy service to help get the project off the ground.