

To:

Local Medical Committees in England, Scotland and Wales

Members of GPC UK

Members of GPC England

Members of GPC Wales

Members of GPC Scotland

Members of Sessional GPs Committee

Members of GP Registrars Committee

15 April 2024

Working together for national GP representation

We are delighted to be writing to LMCs across England, Scotland and Wales setting out a newly negotiated funding agreement between the BMA and GPDF; an arrangement reflecting the joint commitment to working in partnership to support the profession through exceptionally challenging times.

Background

The BMA and the GPDF are acutely aware of the significant pressures facing general practice across the UK. Defending the profession through strong and effective GP representation at both local and national level is crucial at this time.

The BMA GP Committees¹ have a critical role to play because they are responsible for national negotiations on behalf of the profession on the GP contracts and on other terms and conditions affecting the working lives of GPs. The strongest possible and properly resourced representative structures are needed for the committees and their negotiating teams to achieve positive outcomes.

The GP Committees are funded jointly by the BMA and GPDF. LMCs will know that the GPDF pays an annual grant to the BMA to help support GPs to take part in GP Committee work, including the remuneration of the ten executive team members across the national GPCs (UK, England, Wales and Scotland). In this way, the voluntary levy from practices is used to support trade union and professional association activity on behalf of GPs by the BMA.

¹ The General Practitioners Committee UK (GPC UK) is a BMA branch of practice committee that represents all GPs in the UK. It deals with all matters affecting NHS GPs, regardless of BMA membership. GPC UK has five component committees – national GPCs for England, Wales and Scotland, a Sessional GPs committee and a GP Registrars committee

In September 2020 a 'Deed of Grant' was signed between the BMA and GPDF and provided a three-year grant to June 2023. This was extended to the end of December 2023 to allow time for a more robust and effective funding arrangement to be agreed between organisations.

A new Deed of Grant

We are pleased to set out the new Deed of Grant that has been agreed from January 2024 to December 2026; an arrangement to provide stability and continuity for national representation as well as the transparent and fit-for-purpose funding structure requested by LMCs.

LMC views have informed this process through surveys, debates at LMC conferences, and attendance at LMC meetings. Feedback has been clear that whilst LMCs want to see strengthened and effective representation led by the GP profession itself, key factors underpinning this should include close links between LMCs and national committees, value for money, accountability and transparency.

It is with this feedback in mind that the following agreement has been reached through a series of negotiating meetings between the BMA and GPDF:

- A **continued annual grant** from GPDF to the BMA to support GPC activities, recognising the complexities in representing GPs nationally compared to other branches of practice. An increase to the annual grant from £1,115,000 to **£1,592,000²** for 2024, 2025 and 2026 will support core GPC negotiating activities as part of the national representation of general practice across England, Scotland and Wales;
- The introduction of a **discretionary element to the annual grant of 12.5%** - LMCs will be asked to vote on this element of the grant within their particular nation – bringing in improved accountability and control for LMCs through a mechanism to influence funding in accordance with outcomes achieved. In order to do this, an objective evaluation framework is being established which will include a Steering Group consisting of representatives from GPDF, BMA, GPC England, GPC Scotland and GPC Wales to capture concerns. This will allow measures of return on investment to be calculated and communicated which is an essential part of the discretionary component approval process;
- The BMA will continue to provide **advice and support to LMCs on representational activities** for GPs, including the cascade of GP-related BMA publications, production of national advice and policy guidance for GPs, the LMC query service and the LMC listservers³;
- The BMA will continue to arrange the **UK, England, Wales and Scotland LMC conferences and the LMC secretaries conference** if requested by the GPDF, recognising the key value these conferences have in giving LMCs opportunity to meet together, develop the profession and set priorities for national action;

² An increase of £477,000. Proportion of grant will be subject to LMC vote – see next bullet point

³ Except where LMCs have unpaid levies (whether current or historic) to GPDF

- The annual grant will continue to be used to top up the GPC honoraria from the BMA rate to an enhanced GP rate, to enable GP involvement in GPC activities. The grant increase will fund an **increase to the GPC honoraria rate** from a £525 day rate to a **£607 day rate** – to be paid to GPs for all eligible and approved GPC activities within the BMA’s representative structures. This reflects increased costs within general practice and is the first increase to the honoraria rate in over 5 years;
- The introduction of an **annual remuneration for the Chair of the Sessional GPs Committee**, on an equitable basis to the officers of the national committees;
- Improvements to the structure of the funding arrangement to **optimise VAT and maximise funding** available for the purposes of the grant;
- An **uplift mechanism** built into the Deed of Grant to help ensure that funding for national representation remains appropriate and responsive to rising costs, unlike the former grant that decreased in value year-on-year;
- Implementation of a **quality framework**, as mentioned above, to facilitate ongoing review to assess the effectiveness of the grant in meeting the requirements of LMCs, GPDF, GPCs and the BMA. Further information will be provided on the framework for assessing the grant.

The purpose of the new Deed of Grant is to provide stability and resourcing for national structures – GPC UK and its component committees – in order to function effectively in representing the profession⁴. The grant funds a defined set of activities within established committee structures, with each of the six committees having its own membership list and annual meeting schedule. The grant covers both standard committee meetings, as well as non-standard meetings with governments and other external stakeholders, for example the General Medical Council, Department for Work and Pensions, NHS Digital, Royal College of GPs and many others.

However, it is important to note that the funding arrangement does not cover additional activities - for example projects, working groups, extra committee meetings, communications campaigns and legal challenges⁵. Both the BMA and GPDF recognise that additional resourcing will at times be

⁴ Alongside the grant, the BMA will continue to provide its own funding towards the GPCs from BMA member subscriptions. This funding covers staff costs, with the GPCs receiving support from a broad range of specialist teams – committee secretariat, policy, negotiations, legal, communications and IT support. BMA funding also covers infrastructure and travel expenses for committee members

⁵ Note that since the grant funding set out within this Deed was agreed, a request for additional separate funding for GPC England policy leads was approved by GPDF, on a trial basis. During 2024, GPC England policy leads will be paid two daily honoraria per month (to replace the one daily honoraria per month) and deputy policy leads will be paid one daily honoraria per month, to reflect work undertaken outside of meetings. The additional funding also provides for an increase in the number of GPC England policy leads from four to seven

needed to allow the committees to be agile and responsive to external challenges. Running alongside the Deed of Grant will therefore be clear, streamlined and transparent processes for the GPCs to apply for additional funds - guidance and application processes have been put in place within both organisations. Committees will be expected to set out clear objectives for additional funding, how value for money will be achieved and the intended benefits to members and LMCs. They will be asked to report back on outcomes.

We see this new Deed of Grant as being a positive step forward for GP representation at this critical time. It is clear that the collective efforts of both local and national representation for general practice is of paramount importance in the years ahead. Through this new arrangement, the profession can further support its national trade union structures, with LMCs gaining a greater say in the direction being taken.

The BMA and GPDF are committed to working collaboratively together to ensure the aims of the Deed of Grant are met, building further upon the constructive working relationship developed throughout these negotiations. To this end we will be meeting regularly through the duration of the grant, and in consultation with LMCs and the GPCs, to review and assess its effectiveness. We are currently implementing the facilitated evaluation framework which will include representatives of all stakeholder voices.

We hope this communication has been helpful. We have attached the new Deed of Grant and accompanying Memorandum of Understanding to this letter so that LMCs can read the full agreement.

Please do provide any feedback or let us know of any questions via Holly Senior and Nikki McIntosh, BMA Joint Heads of National Negotiations and Representation (NNR) Committees on head.nnrcommittees@bma.org.uk

Best wishes



Dr Phil Cox
GPDF Chair



Dr Trevor Pickersgill
BMA Treasurer