

Sent to all GPSTs, HEE faculty, ES', CS', Practice Managers and Programme Admin Teams on behalf of Dr Simon Newton

Dear Colleague,

I'm writing to give some guidance about GP training in the light of the current Covid-19 emergency.

Events have moved very quickly in the last few days. It's clear GP training will need to change significantly to cope with the increased workload in primary and secondary care. Some of the details of these changes remain unclear, but on a call with my GP educator team this morning we have identified some broad themes to guide us.

- Patient safety is paramount, so formal training (tutorials, programme teaching) will need to be scaled back or suspended to allow practices to try to deal with their clinical workload. You will probably already have heard that all trainee rotation changes in April have been stopped, so trainees who were due to move then will stay in their current post. We don't yet know what will happen to rotations in August. HEE School GP Educators may need to spend some of their education time working back in their practice, and this will be supported by HEE.*
- Trainee welfare through this crisis is now the School's main concern. The School will continue to provide support to GPSTs through our programme teams. Our programmes are working on ways to set up regular virtual support/teaching sessions, and will continue to be the point of contact for trainees with concerns. This work will be led by our Training Programme Directors.*
- Formal tutorials and protected teaching time in practice for GPSTs in GP posts will need to be scaled down or suspended. However appropriate supervision of trainees is as important as ever, if not more so. If GP Supervisors are having difficulty in safely supervising their trainees they should discuss this urgently with their programme Associate Dean.*
- As things stand at the moment GPSTs who are in GP posts will generally remain there. The pressures of service will be greater in both secondary and primary care so flexibility may be needed, but we don't expect a significant movement of GP trainees from primary care into secondary care.*
- Many trainees have approached us asking to be moved to a placement where they feel they can do most good and/or can use specific experience they have acquired in previous training. We are considering how to address these requests, but this is a complex area. We need to look at these requests in the wider medical workforce context, rather than address each request individually.*
- Trusts are sometimes taking action unilaterally to try to maintain their services. Our Dean, Dr Geoff Smith, is working with Trusts across the SW to make sure these actions are appropriate for trainees and don't expose them to unwarranted risk. We also know that trainees in higher-risk groups (e.g. pregnant, pre-existing medical conditions) have understandable concerns about safe working. We are waiting for further national guidance and will work with Trusts and our Lead Employer on this.*
- Assessment requirements and routes of progression in training are still unclear. There is news today that the CSA sittings have been suspended. We don't yet know what the work-around*

will be for this; it will require input from the GMC. It is likely that the MRCGP WPBA requirements will be relaxed but again we have no specific guidance on this yet.

- *This is the first of a series of communications. We intend to send updates as and when there are significant developments and a regular weekly update about GP training.*

This is going to be a very difficult time for the NHS, and for us individually as GPs trying to do our best for our patients. The School's aim is to support its trainees and GP teachers as best we can during this period. Working remotely, which many of us will be doing over the next few months, carries a risk of feeling isolated and unsupported. I hope you can find time to talk to your colleagues and continue to support each other. And I hope you and your families can stay safe.'

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