



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Integrated Impact Assessment: Reform of the specialty doctor contract and introduction of a new specialist grade - Summary

Assessing the impact of the new contract for Associate Specialist and
Specialty (SAS) doctors

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SECTION 1. WHAT ACTION IS THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING AND WHY?

In July 2019, the Welsh Government committed to negotiations on a multi-year pay agreement, incorporating contract reform, for Staff Grade, Associate Specialist and Specialty (SAS) doctors. The formal mandate, issued in February 2020, commissioned NHS Employers in England and Wales to enter into negotiations with the British Medical Association (BMA) in England and Wales. Northern Ireland Employers and the BMA joined the negotiations a few months later.

The mandates set out that the overarching aim of reform is to raise the profile and status of SAS roles, to attract and retain SAS doctors and support a valued and engaged workforce to be productive and effective in delivering quality care to patients.

The parties reached agreement on proposals for a multi-year agreement covering the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024. The key changes include:

- Introduction of a new Specialist grade which will provide an opportunity for progression for highly experienced Specialty Doctors
- A new pay and progression system
- Changes to additional earnings
- Supporting health and wellbeing
- Modernisation of terms and conditions

Long term

This proposal will have many long-term benefits relating to a modernised contract including:

- Removes of the 'opt-out' provision and an extension of plain-time working to support an affordable seven-day health service which will benefit the people of Wales.
- Working towards the goal of having all NHS staff on common terms and conditions.
- In addition, it will ensure that SAS doctors are on the same contract in England and Northern Island which ensures SAS doctors in Wales are not at a disadvantage.

Prevention

This policy ensures that SAS doctors are on a new modernised contract which will also be in place in England and Northern Island which ensures SAS doctors in Wales are not at a disadvantage.

Integration

Implementing this modernised contract in Wales contribute towards the goal of ensuring NHS staff in Wales are operating on similar terms and conditions.

Collaboration and Involvement

The proposal was developed in partnership with BMA Cymru Wales who are a trade union that represents the views and interests of SAS doctors in Wales. For this proposal, the previous Minister for Health and Social Services issued a mandate for negotiation meetings to take place, on a three-country basis, with BMA. As part of these meetings Employers views were taking into consideration and BMA canvased views of SAS doctors in Wales which were then shared with the negotiating group. Once the working negotiating group came to a conclusion the BMA balloted their members to see if they wished to accept the proposed new contract. Members subsequently voted in favour of the proposal.

Impact

The main purpose of the proposal is to ensure SAS doctors in Wales are on a modernised contract, this will contribute towards the goal of ensuring NHS staff in Wales are operating on similar terms and conditions.

The modernisation of the contract will also bring SAS doctors in line with other NHS Medical and Dental staff in Wales on national contracts with regard to their terms and conditions of employment. It also raises the profile of SAS doctors and draws positive attention to a cohort of staff that undertake valuable work within the NHS in Wales.

Costs and Savings

The proposal is not indented to be a cost saving exercise, its purpose is to ensure SAS doctors in Wales will be on a modernised contract which contributes towards the goal of ensuring all NHS staff in Wales are operating on similar terms and conditions. The cost of negotiation and implanting the new contract will be met from the existing contract reform envelop set aside from the existing Welsh Government health budget.

Mechanism

No legislation is required for this proposal

SECTION 8. CONCLUSION

8.1 How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

The proposal was developed in social partnership with BMA Cymru Wales who are a trade union that represent the views and interests of doctors in Wales along with NHS Wales employers. For this proposal, the previous Minister for Health and Social Services issued a mandate for negotiation meetings to take place, on a three-country basis, with BMA and employers from all nations. As part of these meetings the group reviewed the previous SAS contract and analysed each schedule in turn. When discussing each schedule, in advance of the meeting they canvassed for views from their members and colleagues.

Once the working negotiating group came to a conclusion BMA balloted their members to see if they wished to accept the proposed new contract in which their members voted in favour of the proposal.

8.2 What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

The new contract will make a number of significant changes for SAS doctors who chose to take up this new contract, this includes¹:

- A new specialist grade which will provide progression opportunity for highly experience doctors. This will aim to help recruit, motivate and retain senior doctors and contribute to SAS grades being a positive and fulfilling career choice.
- A reformed pay scale which will enable SAS doctors to access the top of the pay scale quicker than the current system, increasing the career average earnings and addressing pay equality issues from long pay structures.
- A new pay progression system that will link progression to the development of skills, competencies and experience through the processes of job planning, appraisal and mandatory training. Pay progression will no longer be automatic and will only be achieved where the required standards have been met.
- A number of safeguards and additional provisions to support the health and wellbeing of SAS doctors.
- A number of changes to modernise the terms and conditions of service to make sure that they are fit for purpose under a changing NHS to support the demands of patient care and to ensure services can be delivered.
- The new contract framework agreement sets out both the changes to pay structures and the terms and conditions of service that the 2021 specialty doctor and specialist contract

¹ [SAS contract reform 2021 | NHS Employers](#)

will adopt that employers, BMA and Governments are agreeing to implement over the period of the agreement and going forward.

8.3 In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- **maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals; and/or,**
- **avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts?**

The proposal has no impact on the seven well-being goals as the purpose of the proposal is to implement a modernised contract for SAS staff in Wales which will contribute towards the goal of ensuring NHS staff in Wales are operating on similar terms and conditions.

8.4 How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

The new SAS contract will be kept under review in line with employment law and the contract will continually be reviewed in partnership with employers and BMA Wales and at a UK level to ensure it is fit for purpose.