



Royal College of
General Practitioners



EXPANSION OF THE GP INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT PROGRAMME

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EXPANSION OF THE GP INTERNATIONAL RECRUITMENT PROGRAMME: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Context

1. General practice is at the heart of the NHS. The Government has set an objective of an extra 5,000 doctors working in general practice by 2020. Good improvements have been made to increase the number of doctors choosing training in general practice, and to make it easier for GPs to return to work after a career break or working overseas. We anticipate that, over time, these changes will mean that we have a sustainable supply of UK-trained doctors into general practice.
2. However many practices continue to face recruitment issues, and newly qualified GPs are often locuming rather than joining a practice as a permanent GP. Some older GPs are leaving the profession early. This is leaving a gap between the number of doctors practices want, and the numbers they are successfully recruiting and retaining. This plan sets out how NHS England, working with Health Education England (HEE), the General Medical Council (GMC), the Royal College of GPs (RCGP), the British Medical Association (BMA), Local Medical Committees, NHS Employers and the Department of Health, will partly bridge that gap through scaling up targeted international recruitment.

Principles

3. In looking to recruit doctors from overseas, we will be guided by the following principles:
 - a. Patient safety is paramount - the standards expected of doctors working in English general practice will be maintained
 - b. We will be bound by the World Health Organisation Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel
 - c. We will look to attract UK-trained doctors back to the UK wherever possible
 - d. UK-trained doctors will not be disadvantaged as a result of this programme
 - e. We will target those countries where there is likely to be the best chance of affordable supply.
4. In doing so, we will continue our efforts and activity on the important work to improve the attractiveness and experience of being a GP in England.

The plan

5. **Acceleration of existing programme.** We will begin by rapidly expanding the current international recruitment programme of European Economic Area (EEA) doctors. The General Practice Forward View, published in April 2016, planned to recruit an extra 500 doctors from overseas over the four years from 2016 to 2020. For 2016 to 2017, we approved plans to recruit an additional 100 doctors, with further doctors to be recruited in 2018 and 2019. **On 22nd August we announced that we are approving proposals from across England for an extra 601 doctors to begin the recruitment process this financial year.** This brings forward our recruitment plans by two years.
6. **Recruitment. By 30 November we will have a Framework Agreement of International Recruitment providers** to operate in EEA countries, and more widely. On 22nd August we are publishing an advertisement in the Official Journal of the European Union and Contracts Finder inviting expressions of interest from companies who will support the recruitment and relocation of overseas doctors. These companies will be tasked with identifying at least 2,000 doctors working abroad to come and work as a GP in England. This will include targeted marketing and relocation packages to attract doctors into England.
7. **Recruitment.** We will also encourage the **4,000 plus current international medical graduates who register to practice in the UK each year to consider applying for GP training places**, given that these are not yet filled at 100% levels.
8. **Co-ordination.** We will establish a GP International Recruitment Office by the beginning of November to organise and run this scaled up international recruitment operation. The role of this Office will be to coordinate the recruitment, support for, and relocation of recruited doctors, working closely with regional and local colleagues and partner organisations.
9. **Local demand.** It is vital that this work is connected to local practices. Building on the early experiences of international recruitment in Lincolnshire, the GP International Recruitment Office will work with regional and local teams and communities to connect international doctors with local practices. We will continue to invite proposals from STPs and CCGs, coordinated on behalf of local practices by the end of November to be part of this expanded national scheme.

10. **Recognition of qualifications and experience.** Patient safety will continue to be at the heart of what we do, and so it is right that there are stringent tests to ensure that doctors trained overseas meet the standards that the public expects. This can sometimes put what might be seen to be barriers in the way of attracting doctors into practice, particularly where the training in other countries is already similar to UK medical training. EEA doctors, whose GP training is recognised in the UK under European law, already get automatic recognition to join the GMC's GP Register. **The RCGP, working with the GMC, will now review the curriculum, training and assessment processes for GPs trained outside the EEA, beginning with Australia,** to identify whether we can streamline the GP registration process for those doctors whose training is seen as equivalent to the UK GP programme.
11. **Making it more attractive.** Working with partners, we have identified the following four changes we can make collectively to the process to make it easier and more attractive for doctors, whilst maintaining our high standards. These are:
 - a. Increase the amount of activity that can be done in the source country, e.g. applications, completing assessments, initial orientation
 - b. Increase the capacity and frequency of Induction and Refresher Scheme assessments to reflect the increased number of doctors that will be completing the Scheme
 - c. Make NHS England the proxy employer for visa sponsorship purposes, thereby removing the burden from local practices to negotiate with the Home Office
 - d. Review the evidence that doctors need to provide to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge of the English language to provide a good standard of practice and care in England.
12. Taken together, our intention is that these measures will enable us to recruit, in total an extra 2000 international doctors over the next three years into English general practice.

The timeline

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| 2017 | Phase one: recruitment begins for 600 doctors
GP International Recruitment Office established
Marketing begins. |
| 2018 | Streamlined processes introduced.
Expanded capacity for assessment
Phase two: recruitment begins for next 1000 doctors |
| 2019 | Phase three: recruitment begins for further 400-1000 doctors. |