



Royal College of
Paediatrics and Child Health

Leading the way in Children's Health

An open letter to Paediatric Trainees in England and Northern Ireland from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

We are writing this letter to let you know that your College, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, shares your concerns about recent developments in relation to negotiations for a new “junior doctor” contract.

Medical trainees rely on the BMA to negotiate contracts of employment. The BMA has acted legitimately in refusing to re-enter negotiations after failing to achieve reassurance that certain safeguards will be honoured. The Department of Health has announced that it will be implementing an unacceptable new contract for trainees from August 2016. Therefore the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health cannot remain silent.

The maintenance of high standards for child health services throughout the UK is dependent upon the contribution of paediatric trainees working in collaboration with consultants. Our disquiet about the imposition of this new contract includes the following considerations:

- Removal of annual pay progression and its replacement with pay increases only at points of responsibility is potentially discriminatory for less than full time trainees as they will be exposed to a greater financial risk because of the delay they will inevitably experience in reaching their responsibility thresholds
- The removal of annual increments from those taking time “out of programme”, for example for research training, other additional experience, or parental leave, is damaging to our attempts to promote growth and excellence in paediatric academia, and family-friendly working for mothers and fathers
- Although basic pay may rise, it is estimated that the removal of banding and the rebranding of evening and weekend working as ‘normal hours’, is likely to lead to a reduction in income of about 15%
- The removal of financial penalties for Trusts that breach safeguards designed to prevent employers from requiring trainees to work excessively long hours is retrogressive and will damage patient well-being

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health considers that the imposition of this new contract, as currently presented, will adversely affect recruitment, retention and the morale of our trainee workforce. The consequences, gravely damaging to the health and wellbeing of children, include increased difficulty in providing 24/7 paediatric cover, increasing need for locum and agency staff, and a reduction in innovation and medical advance.

Please be assured that we will continue to make these representations at the highest level. We are calling upon Government and NHS Employers to re-open meaningful negotiations with the BMA without delay and agree a contract that is safe for our patients and fair to our trainees.

Professor Neena Modi, President, RCPCH
Dr David James, Chair, RCPCH Trainees' Committee