

# Transition to the 2021 contracts: supporting SAS doctors to make an informed decision

\*Where the term 'specialist' is used in this document, it is used to denote doctors and dentists employed on the [specialist grade \(England\) 2021 contract](#).

## Introduction

Existing specialty doctors on national terms and conditions have been given the choice as to whether they want to stay on their existing terms and conditions or move to the new contract. The new contract has a reformed pay scale and a number of changes to the terms and conditions which doctors will need to consider before making their decision.

Since the announcement of the 3 per cent uplift for doctors on the 2008 specialty doctor contract, NHS Employers has received an increase in queries from employers, regarding the impact of this on doctors' decisions and whether the new 2021 contract is still beneficial for SAS doctors.

The decision to transfer or remain on their existing terms and conditions sits with individual SAS doctor, but this document aims to help employers articulate the impact of the 3 per cent uplift. It also describes the advantages and disadvantages of transferring to the new contract, in order to support SAS doctors to make an informed decision, that takes into consideration the overall package of reform.

## Impact of the 3 per cent uplift for doctors on 2008 TCS

In July 2021, the government announced a 3 per cent uplift for NHS staff who weren't already part of multiyear pay deals. The 2021 SAS contracts are part of such a multiyear pay deal and therefore their pay scales do not receive this 3 per cent uplift. The pay uplift for doctors on the 2008 specialty doctor contract may have an impact on the overall desirability of the new contract, and for the first year of transition moving to the new contract will now be comparatively less favourable.

The new contract was designed so that no doctor would see detriment to basic pay on moving to the contract. However, this is now not the case and for some SAS doctors, transferring to the new contract in year one means they will see a reduction in their basic pay.

This leads to some practical challenges for employers. Employers will need to ensure that the SAS doctor is aware of any reduction in salary at the point where the salary and job plan are offered for the new contract. Where a doctor has already

received backdating of the 3 per cent uplift to the 2008 specialty doctor contract effective from 1 April 2021, the doctor may have been overpaid during this period. Any arrangements for repayment should be discussed and agreed at this point of the process so that the doctor can make an informed decision whether to accept the contract or not.

It remains the case for many, that transferring to the new contract still represents a benefit in terms of their basic pay over a number of years, due to the flatter pay scale resulting in quicker progression to the top of the pay scale. The 2021 contract also includes a number of changes to wider terms and conditions that were secured as part of the agreement.

SAS doctors should take into consideration the overall package before making their decision.

## **Advantages of transferring to the new contract**

- Multi-year pay deal including pay awards set for 21/21, 22/23 and 23/24.
- Flatter pay scale which results in faster progression to the top of the pay scale so doctors will earn more earlier on in their career. This is better suited to a CARE pension scheme and supports the recommendations from the gender pay gap in medicine report.
- Increased on-call availability supplements, in line with those received by consultants.
- New safeguards to protect SAS doctors working the most onerous unsocial hours working patterns.
- Additional day of annual leave after seven years in the grade.
- Improved pay and provisions for shared parental leave and child bereavement leave.
- Contractual right for one supporting professional activity (SPA) to be used for job planning, appraisal and revalidation purposes.

## **Disadvantages of transferring to the new contract**

- Likely reduction in basic pay for year one of transition and doctors on the highest points on the pay scale will have a decrease in cumulative basic pay on the 2021 contract when compared to the 2008 contract over three years. Doctors will need to look at their individual pay journey to understand their own circumstances.
- Extension of plain time from 7am-7pm on weekdays, to 7am-9pm on weekdays, meaning that work between 7pm and 9pm would be paid at standard rates.
- Changes to redundancy payments.

## Further information

All contract documentation, guidance and resources relating to the new contracts can be found on the [NHS Employers website](#).