

SAS eligibility and permanency framework

June 2026

About

As part of the SAS deal agreed between the Department of Health and Social Care and the British Medical Association (BMA) in June 2024, it was decided that a process would be developed to allow locally employed doctors (LEDs) who have been fulfilling a role that is comparable to the roles, duties and responsibilities of a SAS doctor for 24 months or more with the same employer, to be offered the opportunity to move to a permanent SAS contract. The aim is to ensure that LEDs are given the opportunity to advance their careers, transition to SAS roles where appropriate and offer job security.

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Supporting LEDs to advance their careers

This guidance details the steps for LEDs who are currently working in a role that is comparable to the roles, duties and responsibilities of a SAS doctor who wish to transfer to a permanent SAS contract. The doctor and employer will work together to ensure a smooth transition, with this guidance offering a clear and structured outline of the necessary steps, qualifications and requirements of the framework.

For the purpose of this document, whenever 'doctor' is used, it is intended to mean a doctor or dentist, and this process applies to both. References to the SAS TCS mean either the specialty doctor 2021 TCS or the specialist 2021 TCS, depending on to which grade the LED is moving.

Eligibility criteria for LEDs

This guidance applies to LEDs who have been employed at the same trust for 24 months or more and are carrying out the roles, duties and responsibilities comparable of a SAS doctor. Outlined below are the eligibility requirements for LEDs to be considered for a transfer to a SAS contract.

Qualifications:

- Hold a valid medical degree.
- If demonstrably required for the role, based on the person specification, hold Royal College membership or equivalent competencies.

Conditions:

- Currently employed on a local employment contract (or contracts) for 24 continuous months or more with the same employer and in a role that is comparable to the roles, duties and responsibilities of a SAS doctor. A role comparable to a SAS doctor for eligibility purposes should be assessed by comparing the doctor's actual duties, scope of practice and level of clinical responsibility against the relevant SAS job description/person specification and local clinical governance arrangements. Job title, pay scale and rota

position may be considered as supporting indicators and where they align with SAS-level work, will normally be accepted as evidence of comparability.

- Completed at least four years post-graduate training with two in the relevant specialty (or equivalent if less than full time). This may include overseas training or experience gained outside a formal UK training programme, where the doctor can demonstrate equivalent specialty competencies and scope of practice through documented clinical roles, supervised practice or recognised international qualifications.

Requirements:

- Professional competency evaluation form to be completed with employment history included.
- Form to be signed by current educational/clinical supervisor or equivalent then submitted to medical workforce for review.

Window of opportunity – staged approach

To support a clear and structured process for transferring from an LED contract to a permanent SAS contract, the following stages apply:

Stage one: initial choice window

- Eligible LEDs can express interest in transferring to a permanent SAS contract during a six-month choice window, from 1 September 2026 until March 2027.
- Employers must notify all eligible LEDs of:
 - The transfer process
 - The time constraint
 - Their eligibility (24 months of continuous employment carrying out a comparable role to a SAS doctor)
- If an employer fails to notify, the LEDs window should be extended accordingly.

Stage two: submission of competency evaluation

- During the choice window, the LED completes the Professional Competency Evaluation form (Annex 1).
- The form must be signed by the LED and their clinical/educational supervisor and submitted to medical workforce for review.
- Employers will ensure applicants have clearly signposted access to support in completing the competency evaluation form, including support from a SAS advocate, SAS tutor or other equivalent supportive roles, where available.

Stage three: employer review

- Within six weeks, the employer reviews the form to confirm:
 - The LED meets the basic entry criteria for the SAS grade.
 - The current role is comparable to a SAS doctor's duties and responsibilities.

Stage four: outcome

- If eligible the LED is offered a permanent SAS contract and begins the job planning process as set out in Schedule 4 of the SAS TCS.
- Following completion of this process, the employing organisation will offer the doctor a job plan and new contract in writing.
- Following the offer, the doctor has one calendar month within which to accept or decline the offer in writing.

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- If not eligible, the LED must incorporate the gaps identified in the “no” or “partial” sections of the competency form into their personal development plan.
 - These gaps should be addressed before reapplying.
 - The LED can next discuss and apply at the time of their next annual appraisal.

During the initial implementation of this process, LEDs, if eligible, can express their interest to move to a permanent SAS contract during a six-month choice window, from 1 September 2026 until March 2027. Employers will be required to contact all eligible LEDs to make them aware of the transfer process, their eligibility and the time constraint. Failure to do so on the part of the employer should not prove detrimental to the LED, and their window of interest should be accordingly extended. Eligible doctors should apply during this window of opportunity. However, if they do not apply during the choice window, they can discuss their career development during their next annual appraisal where able, including whether a permanent SAS role is appropriate and requested.

After the initial implementation and following the closure of the choice window, employers may set up a fixed-term indicator or diary reminder locally on ESR so that, in the run up to 24 months' service, they can identify doctors who may be eligible. When a doctor approaches or reaches 24 months of continuous service in a comparable role, the employer should contact them to make them aware that they can apply, should they wish to, by following the process set out above.

LEDs reaching 24 months of employment during the choice window

LEDs who reach 24 months of employment during the choice window are eligible to enter the process, even if their six-week employer review period extends beyond the official choice window dates. The same staged process applies as set out above.

Standard process after the choice window

Once the initial choice window closes, LEDs who reach 24 months of employment in a comparable role can apply to transfer to a permanent SAS contract at this stage following the process detailed above.

It is expected that this process will form part of regular workforce planning and talent management activities, to ensure that LEDs are supported to progress into SAS roles where appropriate.

Salary on transfer

As set out in Schedule 12 paragraph 4 of the SAS Terms and Conditions of Service, the default position when doctors enter the SAS grade is to place them on the minimum point of the pay scale. However, where they have experience in the same or higher grade or equivalent (measured in terms of the current maximum rate of full-time basic salary), such experience should be recognised in line with the provisions of Schedule 12 paragraphs 5-8 when determining their starting salary. The employer may also take equivalent non-NHS experience into account.

This policy does not however intend to replace any pre-existing local contractual pay protection provisions for LEDs upon transferring to a SAS contract.

Evidence of service at the same or higher grade or equivalent

To enable accurate pay placement, doctors must provide an up-to-date CV detailing all previous posts, grades and dates so that equivalent service can be assured. Supporting evidence such as that from appraisals, job plans and work schedules may also be submitted. Assessment of equivalent experience for pay placement should be made in line with Schedule 12 of the 2021 SAS Terms and Conditions of Service, taking account of evidence of the doctor's scope of practice, level of responsibility and relevant experience. Where such evidence demonstrates work at a level comparable to SAS duties, this should normally be recognised for pay placement purposes under this Framework. This may include LEDs who are assessed as having held roles, duties and responsibilities comparable to a SAS doctor, despite being contracted on non-SAS pay arrangements.

LEDs do not receive pay protection when transferring to SAS contracts, but their experience must be properly recognised and any reduction in pay must be justified and evidence based.

Additional information

An expression of interest by way of completion of the competency evaluation form is not legally binding, nor shall it oblige the doctor to transfer to SAS TCS but will signify that the doctor wishes to be considered for a SAS contract and commence the job planning process in the expectation of transferring.

During the process, if the employer determines that the LED has not provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that their role is comparable to a SAS role, the employer should however explore offering an alternative permanent contract to the doctor. If the employer is unable to do so, there should be an explanation as to the reasons why, alongside a description of how the trust will support the individual into accessing a more secure, long-term contract should they wish to do so.

If the doctor feels the decision does not fully consider how the evidence supports the equivalence of their current role to a SAS post, they may refer to their organisation's grievance policy and procedures.

Annex 1

Locally employed doctor professional competency evaluation form

Instructions: This document is to be completed by the locally employed doctor who would like to be considered to transfer to a permanent SAS contract. It is expected that the doctor completing this form can demonstrate that their current role is comparable to the roles, duties and responsibilities of a SAS doctor.

Once completed, the form should be reviewed and signed by your educational or clinical supervisor and then submitted to medical workforce for review.

It is important to maintain all records of communication, assessments and decisions making during this process. Records should be stored securely according to your data protection rules.

Download an [editable Word version](#) of the evaluation form.

Applicant name:			
Applicant GMC No:			
Employment history: Please complete your employment history to help demonstrate your experience			
Role/job title	Employer name	Post start date DD/MM/YYYY	Post end date DD/MM/YYYY
Applicant declaration:	I confirm that the information I have provided in this form is true and accurate.		
Applicant signature:			

A role comparable to the roles, duties and responsibilities of a SAS doctor. Please demonstrate how your current role is comparable to the roles, duties and responsibilities of a SAS doctor and you meet the entry criteria for a SAS role. Your clinical supervisor can also complete this section to indicate that they have personally witnessed if appropriate.	Yes	Partial	No
1. Full registration and licence to practice with the General Medical Council.			
2. Shall have completed at least four years' full-time postgraduate training (or its equivalent gained on a part-time or flexible basis), at least two of which will be in a specialty training programme in a relevant specialty or as a fixed term specialty trainee in a relevant specialty; OR shall have equivalent experience and competencies (e.g. from outside formal UK grad training)			
3. Holds Royal College membership or equivalent competencies.			
4. Employed currently by the same organisation for 24 months or more on a local contract or contracts.			
5. Working on a rota at the same level as a SAS doctor.			
6. Acute care safe, evidenced by current ALS certificate or equivalent (e.g. ACLS) for roles involving out-of-hours or acute care work.			
7. Working in a current role with relevant specialty clinical knowledge with the capacity			

to apply sound clinical knowledge relevant to a SAS role.			
8. Experience in current role of making clinical decisions and managing risk. Knows when to seek help and able to prioritise clinical need.			
9. Working in a comparable role and can demonstrate the practical skills required for the job.			
10. Proven ability to work effectively in different clinical settings required for the job.			
11. Capacity to be alert to dangers or problems. Demonstrates awareness of good decision making with a track record of engaging in clinical governance.			
12. Evidence of active participation in audit in current role.			
13. Evidence of interest and experience in teaching where required in current role.			
14. Demonstrated experience working in a team, valuing the input of other professionals.			
15. Completed a satisfactory appraisal.			
16. Completed trust mandatory training.			
17. Completed multi-source feedback requirements of appraisal.			
18. Evidence in current role of being able to adapt and work with employer to deliver improved patient care.			

Download a Word version of the LED professional competency evaluation form. [LINK](#)