

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh response

Consultation with stakeholders on removing the Scottish Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards (SACDA) from the remit of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (“the College”) is pleased to respond to this consultation with stakeholders on removing the Scottish Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards (SACDA) from the remit of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life. The College is an independent clinical standard-setting body and professional membership organisation, which aims to improve and maintain the quality of patient care. Founded in 1681, we support and educate doctors in the hospital sector throughout Scotland and the world with over 12,000 Fellows and Members in 91 countries, covering 30 medical specialties.

Fellows of the College have commented that this proposed change in arrangements to remove SACDA from the remit of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life is a retrograde step in terms of accountability and transparency, and the College would wish to see more detail on how this process would work and how the assessment process would be run and maintained.

The College supports improved medical workforce planning in Scotland to recruit and retain the highest quality doctors. There are workforce shortages across the country with rota gaps creating additional pressures in an already difficult environment. There is a pressing need to value healthcare professionals at every stage in their careers, to ensure that medicine remains an attractive career choice and offers support for medical professionals as they progress throughout their careers. The proposed change in governance arrangements is therefore a cause for concern to the College for a number of reasons.

Distinction Awards continue to be frozen in Scotland with no increase in the value of awards, no new awards and no progression through the award scheme. In England, the Advisory Committee on Clinical Excellence Awards has announced that the equivalent 2018 Clinical Excellence Awards round will shortly open for applications for new national awards and for renewals. It is therefore a priority to ensure that there is an equitable playing field to help drive the best possible standards of patient care across the whole of the UK and ensure we recruit and retain a world class medical workforce.

The College notes with concern that since 2010, Consultants in NHS Scotland have not received the same opportunities for recognition for outstanding professional work as their colleagues in NHS England and other parts of the UK. College Fellows believe that this has added to recruitment pressures for senior clinical and academic posts in Scotland, where there is a critical situation, with

many Health Boards forced to repeat recruitment due to no applicants or no suitable applicants for posts. The College is also concerned that this proposed move indicates a further shift to depreciate the Distinction Awards scheme in Scotland, and will be taken as a clear signal that there will be no change to the current arrangements in the foreseeable future. The College is concerned that this proposed change in governance arrangements would provide an additional undertone that Scotland will remain relatively unattractive in the long term to clinicians regarding the recognition of exceptional professional work.

Spending on locum doctors to address the workforce shortage is larger (£s) and rising as Health Boards strive to maintain services against gaps at all levels. Improving the status of working as a consultant in Scotland will recognise excellence and support recruitment.

The College recognises the limitations of the scheme currently frozen and would be keen to contribute to work to develop an alternative scheme that should continue to be under the remit of the Commissioner.