



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



The Scottish  
Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



Department of  
**Health**  
An Roinn Sláinte  
Máinnstríe O Poustie  
[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



General  
Medical  
Council

To Chief Executive  
NHS/HSC organisations  
24 May 2022

Dear Colleague,

### **Appropriate release of medical colleagues for the purposes for carrying out work for the wider health system**

We write to encourage you and your Board to continue to look favourably on requests from doctors seeking your support to undertake national or regional work for the wider benefit of the public and of health services across England and the devolved administrations. This mirrors a [similar ask to NHS and HSC employers made in 2017](#).

Specifically, our ask relates to work:

- which is undertaken on behalf of regulators, colleges and other professional bodies, and national NHS functions – although increasingly this may also be relevant to supporting health systems and/or regions, and;
- which is relevant to the quality and safety of patient care, to medical education and training (through devising curriculum and the smooth running of examinations), and to the planning, delivery and independent assurance of both local and national health services.

We recognise that there are considerable pressures on local resources, particularly clinical staffing, and that you will need to ensure that clinical and service commitments are managed appropriately as we now move from COVID-19 response to recovery and reform for the future.

However, such national or regional activity by your clinical staff should also be regarded as an investment in the improvement of patient care and a reflection of high standards; the COVID-19 pandemic was a reminder of the value delivered by time allocated in job plans to supporting professional activities (SPA) through research, training and strategic management that delivered new approaches to clinical care and medical training in record time.

Direct benefits may also accrue to organisations which support these activities through:

- the increased skills and experience, including clinical and strategic leadership, gained by individuals
- improved retention of individuals who are able to pursue their development and to demonstrate their personal pursuit of innovation and higher professional standards for their own appraisal and revalidation, beyond the opportunities that an individual organisation is able to provide
- improved recruitment, with many doctors likely to be more attracted to employers who will support career development through the flexible use of SPA allowances.

---

We are grateful to those organisations and leaders who have continued to support such activity throughout the pandemic where this was compatible with maintaining patient care. Where this was not routinely the case, we would be grateful for your early review of relevant organisational policies.

Thank you for your continued support for the medical profession.

Yours sincerely



Professor Sir Chris Whitty  
Chief Medical Officer, England



Professor Sir Gregor Smith  
Chief Medical Officer, Scotland



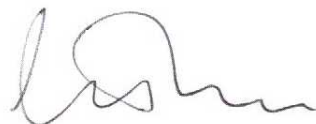
Sir Frank Atherton  
Chief Medical Officer, Wales



Professor Sir Michael McBride  
Chief Medical Officer, Northern Ireland



Professor Steve Powis  
Medical Director NHS England and  
Improvement



Professor Dame Carrie MacEwen  
Chair, GMC



Professor Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard  
Chair, Academy of Medical Royal  
Colleges