

Joint Statement on Junior Doctor Health and Wellbeing

There is a shared commitment between Scottish Government, BMA Scotland and NHS Scotland Employers (NHS Employers) to work together to address the issue of doctors' health and wellbeing and ensure that junior doctors in Scotland are working in safe and supportive working environments. The [BMA Scotland Supporting junior doctor wellbeing report](#) October 2021 and the [Expert Working Group 48 hour report](#) published shortly thereafter, both set out key priorities and recommendations for addressing the health and wellbeing of junior doctors. The Scottish Government, BMA Scotland and NHS Employers are fully committed to working in partnership to achieve implementation of the recommendations in the EWG report, many of which are highlighted in the BMA wellbeing report.

This statement provides detail on the agreement reached between Scottish Government, BMA Scotland, and NHS Employers, at the meeting of all parties on 22 February 2022, as well as an update on subsequent discussions to date on progress to implement the recommendations set out in the above reports, to address doctor fatigue and wellbeing. Whilst this statement provides detail on the commitment by Scottish Government, BMA Scotland, and NHS Employers on identified key priority areas, all parties have agreed that there needs to be substantive progress on implementation of Expert Working Group report's recommendations.

The Scottish Government, BMA Scotland and NHS Employers commitments:

1. To implement a maximum number of long shifts for junior doctors

- Scottish Government, BMA and NHS Employers have agreed to 'restrict the consecutive days of long shifts (greater than 10 hours) to a limit of 4 in any seven days for junior doctors. A limit on the number of long shifts for junior doctors was both an Expert Working Group recommendation and key priority within the BMA Wellbeing report.
- Employers will work through Management Steering Group (MSG) to maximise the level of compliance on rotas containing long shifts in line with agreement above, by the changeover on 3rd August, 2022. MSG will collect information on the rotas that are not compliant by that date and the reasons for non-compliance and will then work with Boards on making all rotas fully compliant, by February 2023. MSG and Scottish Government will work with Boards to assess progress and report this regularly to the SJDC/MSG meetings and initiate action to support boards to achieve full compliance.
- Scottish Government, BMA and NHS employers are committed to work together to address the issue of fatigue for junior doctors. Building on [existing best practice in good rota design](#), all parties will explore potential future improvements to junior doctor rotas and working patterns to minimise fatigue and improve wellbeing and safety.

2. Ensure earlier release of rotas in advance for junior doctors

- There has been a long-standing issue of junior doctors not being given their rotas on time – at least six weeks in advance - of starting post. This was highlighted in the BMA Wellbeing report and further in the BMA Scotland Junior doctor rota survey report, published January 2022
- This is a priority issue, and initial work has already been undertaken to identify barriers and to work towards focused solutions. A Short Life Working Group (SLWG) is being established with the objective to identify implementable solutions to ensure earlier release of rotas providing at least 6 weeks' notice for junior doctors, between identified key stakeholders including NHS Education for Scotland (NES)/Scotland Deanery, NHS Boards, BMA SJDC and Scottish Government. The SLWG will be expected to set out a robust solutions plan, with agreed deliverables and timescales to achieve demonstrable progress on this issue. Work has already been undertaken to make progress on this issue, and an initial review will be undertaken by key stakeholders post-August changeover, and at further agreed juncture to assess progress, with a view to learning lessons and agreeing implementable solutions where identified improvements are still required to be made.

3. Rest breaks for junior doctors

- Scottish Government, BMA and NHS Employers are fully committed to addressing wellbeing issues. The issue of junior doctors' being unable to take their breaks and rest periods –is a critical issue of safety and one that is of high priority. This is highlighted in the BMA Scotland wellbeing and BMA Junior doctor rota survey report and findings, and the EWG 48 hour report as key for addressing junior doctor fatigue. A whole system approach is required to culture change which recognises and is supportive of the need to protect time allowing for rest to address fatigue and wellbeing and minimise safety risks.
- This will be a high priority issue for MSG and will form part of the solution plan to be set out by NHS Employers which will determine the proposed approach to lead and drive improvements on this issue, at both the national and local level.

4. Rota monitoring

- A decision was taken by the Scottish Government to formally suspend rota monitoring 17 December until end of January 2022. Scottish Government then subsequently informed Boards of a further decision that monitoring be reinstated from 1 February 2022. Issues in relation to monitoring will be discussed in partnership between MSG/NHS board management and BMA SJDC/local LNC junior doctor subcommittee. Any further decision to suspend rota monitoring will be considered in partnership with the BMA.
- NHS Boards are contractually obliged to monitor junior doctor working hours as per agreed guidance. Scottish Government, BMA, and NHS employers will continue to work together to address identified areas of issue around monitoring and processes recognising the importance of rota monitoring as a mechanism to check that junior doctor working patterns are safe and junior doctors are able to take required breaks and rest, they are entitled to.

5. Rest facilities for junior doctors

- The provision of rest and catering facilities is an important component of staff health and wellbeing. The Expert Working Group and BMA wellbeing reports stress the need to develop a supportive culture which enables junior doctors to take rest breaks, with improved rest facilities for junior doctors, particularly for those working overnight, to minimise fatigue.

Next steps

Scottish Government, BMA, and NHS Employers will continue to work together to fully implement the commitments set out above, with the shared aim of improving junior doctor wellbeing. As above, all parties will further explore other improvements to address fatigue and improve wellbeing and safety for junior doctors.



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