



# SAS Charter for Wales

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# 1 SAS Charter for Wales

This Charter was prepared and agreed in 2016 by the former SAS Reference Group and recently updated in 2023 with agreement with the Medical and Dental Business Group (MDBG) which includes representatives from NHS Wales employers, Welsh Government, BMA Cymru Wales and HEIW. It demonstrates a commitment to supporting and developing the role of the SAS doctor as a highly valued and vital part of the medical work force in Wales. It sets out both the rights and responsibilities of SAS doctors and their employers with a commitment to support and enable SAS doctors and dentists to realise their full clinical potential and to deliver the best patient care.

## 2 SAS doctors

As senior clinicians, SAS doctors bring experienced and specialist care, possessing individual and often highly specialised skills. As they gain experience, SAS doctors will be encouraged to develop the ability to work independently and also to take on broader roles such as clinical and educational supervisors and as trained appraisers for their colleagues, including consultants.

SAS doctors must be supported in their ongoing career development and progression with recognition and support of their continuing educational and training developmental needs.

SAS doctors need support and resources to develop both personally and professionally. Employers in NHS Wales are committed to ensuring that the role of SAS doctors is fully acknowledged and respected by management, colleagues and patients. Each SAS doctor should be able to work in an environment which nurtures development within the grade and is free from harassment, bullying and discrimination. SAS doctors should feel they are able to freely raise concerns about patient safety if they arise.

## 3 Recommendations

Employers in NHS Wales are committed to the following:

### 3.1 Appropriate contract, job plan and activities

- A contract of employment which incorporates national terms and conditions.
- An appropriate agreed job plan specific and relevant to their role within the service and individual specialised skills. This can only be changed by mutual agreement between the SAS doctor and their Clinical Manager, taking into consideration any recommendations following appraisal. This should be reviewed at least annually.
  - When a new role is advertised, a proposed job plan should be in place pending mutual agreement.
- A job plan must contain appropriate SPA time for the role. The Welsh SAS Good Practice Guide recognises that 20% of working time (2 SPA sessions) should be devoted to SPA. The 2008 and 2021 SAS contracts state that there should be a minimum of 1 session of SPA. The 2021 specialty doctor contract states that a minimum of 1 session of SPA should be designated for job planning, appraisal, and revalidation. For any further activities that are classed as SPA, further SPA time should be provided in the job plan. The requirement for SPA may change over time and flexibility should be applied and reviewed as appropriate.

- Recommendations of the relevant Royal Colleges and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges should be considered. Employers should ensure that doctors have the support needed to enable them to meet the requirements of the second threshold and can progress in their career. Threshold two requires evidence of demonstrating a contribution to a wider role which may require reassessment of the balance between Supporting Professional Activities and Direct Clinical Care duties and allocations.
- Terms such as middle grade/non consultant career grade should not be used.
- Work commitments and scheduling which recognise the importance of an appropriate balance between daytime and out of hours work depending on specialty/individual job plan.
  - For doctors on the 2021 contract, rotas should reflect the 40% limit on working time out of hours stipulated in the 2021 contract, alongside other rota design requirements.
- An annual appraisal which must address ongoing educational development and result in a personal development plan (PDP). The PDP will then inform the job plan review of any educational or developmental requirements for the following year.
- The use of fixed term and non-standard contracts should be avoided where possible and they should only be used where there is a clear requirement to do so. Where SAS doctors are employed on successive fixed term contracts employers should consider whether there is scope for the doctor to be considered for a substantive appointment, noting that any doctor on a fixed-term contract for 4 or more years will automatically become a permanent employee, unless the employer can show there is a good business reason not to do so.
- Where a doctor working on a non-standard contract, whose role mirrors that of a Specialty Doctor and who meets the eligibility criteria considered for the Specialty Doctor contract (as set out in the 2021 contract), they should be considered for substantive appointment once they meet the eligibility criteria contained in the national contract.
- SAS doctors must be fully recognised, respected and valued by employers and colleagues. There must be zero tolerance to bullying, harassment and victimisation of SAS doctors.

### 3.2 Support

- Appropriate access to resources such as office accommodation and technology to enable SAS doctors to do their jobs effectively and efficiently. This includes email, other software packages, and suitable storage facilities for confidential work. Appropriate secretarial/admin support should be provided.
- Effective induction into their role and their location including a mentoring programme for new SAS doctors.
- All Health Boards/Trusts in Wales should appoint an SAS advocate.
  - An SAS advocate's main role is to provide help and support and be a visible point of contact for SAS doctors in the organisation.
  - An SAS advocate should also:

- signpost SAS doctors to the relevant departments, colleagues, or information within the employing organisation as well as, where relevant, trade union representatives to provide support on their health and wellbeing including actions to address concerns raised regarding working relationships.
- work with the Health Board/Trust and LNC to ensure a consistent approach to SAS doctors' health and wellbeing is adopted across the Health Board/Trust.
- help to ensure the implementation of the SAS charter within their Health Board/Trust.
- Appropriate IT support to ensure transparency of NHS data and provision of care as well as attribution of work to appropriate clinicians. This will include coding of patients and work activity under a SAS doctor's name, guidance on how to code appropriately and access to this data when required. Health Boards/Trusts should ensure appropriate IT is available to enable this to be achieved.
- Access to appropriate (and individualised where available) data for appraisal & revalidation.
- Protected time for training and other professional activities for SAS doctors so that they can meet their individual, educational and career development needs.
- As per Academy of Medical Royal College Guidance on Taking Responsibility (June 2014), employers should ensure that where a SAS doctor is the clinician responsible for a patient's care this should be appropriately displayed.

### 3.3 Development

Employers will provide the following:

- Support SAS doctors in undertaking credentials or being accredited with credentials.
- Support should be offered for those SAS doctors wishing to apply for Certificate of Eligibility for Specialist Register (CESR), or develop their skills towards applying for a specialist post when available, in order to identify and meet their needs and competencies. This may include the requirement for secondment or for top up training which employers should fully support. Further information can be found on the SAS page of the HEIW website.
- Adequate support and time allocation to allow SAS doctors to fully participate in the employer's annual appraisal process including access to appraisee training (and appraiser training where applicable) and the necessary CPD and study leave requirements.
- Sufficient breadth and depth of clinical work and relevant professional activities to enable the SAS doctors to achieve and maintain relevant specialist competencies and develop as clinicians.
- Accountability arrangements should be commensurate with the seniority of the practitioner. Local governance systems should consider BMA policy which supports appropriately skilled and experienced SAS doctors working autonomously. NHS Employers and the General Medical Council have confirmed that there is no contractual or regulatory impediment to SAS doctors working autonomously within defined local governance systems.

- SAS Tutors based in each of the Health Boards/Trusts across Wales are in place to help facilitate training and career progression for SAS doctors via HEIW. SAS tutors can provide further information on professional development support and educational supervisor support in applying for CESR.

### 3.4 Involvement in organisational structures

- All SAS doctors should be encouraged and supported to apply for management posts in their organisation. SAS doctors who meet the criteria for appointment to management roles should have an equal opportunity as those from other branches of practice to be considered and should be supported in their development where they aspire to reach such roles. Please see Development section above.
- SAS doctors appointed to management posts should be remunerated appropriately. This may include acting up payments or other responsibility payments.
- SAS doctors should be welcome members of the Medical Staff Committee and should be encouraged to attend these and Directorate meetings or equivalent.
- Access (in the same way as other colleagues) to time off for external, civic and trade union duties.

## 4 Further resources

- This document sets out the joint aspirations of the parties and should be read in conjunction with the various T&Cs under which SAS doctors are employed.
- The T&Cs, SAS Job Planning Guidance and the Welsh SAS Good Practice Guide can be found on the website of the Welsh NHS Confederation:

<https://www.nhsconfed.org/specialty-and-associate-specialist-sas-doctors-wales>