



Advice from BMA members to doctors who are new to the UK



NEW TO
THE UK
IMG
DOCTORS



Thank you to all the
BMA members who took the
time to contribute to this book.

We hope their words help you
find inspiration and perspective
throughout your career.



YOUR PATIENTS

Hello there, and welcome. I would suggest you get to know each of your patients as well as you can, in all aspects. You may well see them again, and they will realise that you care and have a broad interest in them as a person. Research suggests that this may contribute positively to their health!

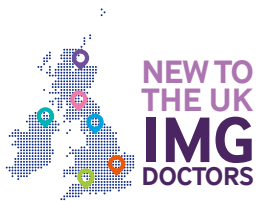
Rex Melville
Consultant physician in GUM (genitourinary medicine)



YOUR PATIENTS

The most important professional behaviour for any doctor is – listen hard, listen long and listen well to the patient.

Tim Owen
Retired GP



SHADOWING



What really helped me adapt to F1 was to start shadowing a week before my first shift. I followed a very competent F1 and was able to get an impression of what would be expected of me.

Noah Bohge
FY2



SHADOWING

Advocate for yourself and make sure you are allowed some time to shadow the other doctors – all foundation doctors get this when they start and so should you. It seems to really make a difference to the international doctors I have worked with.

Anna Jackson

Paediatric specialty trainee



YOUR COLLEAGUES

Respect

Please remember that the NHS is less hierarchical than some other countries' healthcare systems, so please treat EVERYONE with respect, from cleaning staff to canteen staff, to the CEO. No one is beneath you, so please don't treat them as such. Most of your nurses have done the job longer than you have been in medical school. Listen to them carefully, especially if they raise a concern.

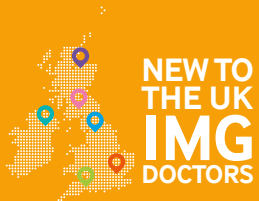
Chen Lim
ED consultant



BE CONFIDENT

Be confident. Hold your head up and do not be intimidated. You have earned your place in the trust through hard work and brilliance. You are a doctor. Never let anyone make you feel less than you are.

Somto Ogbuagu
Paediatric trainee registrar



BE CONFIDENT

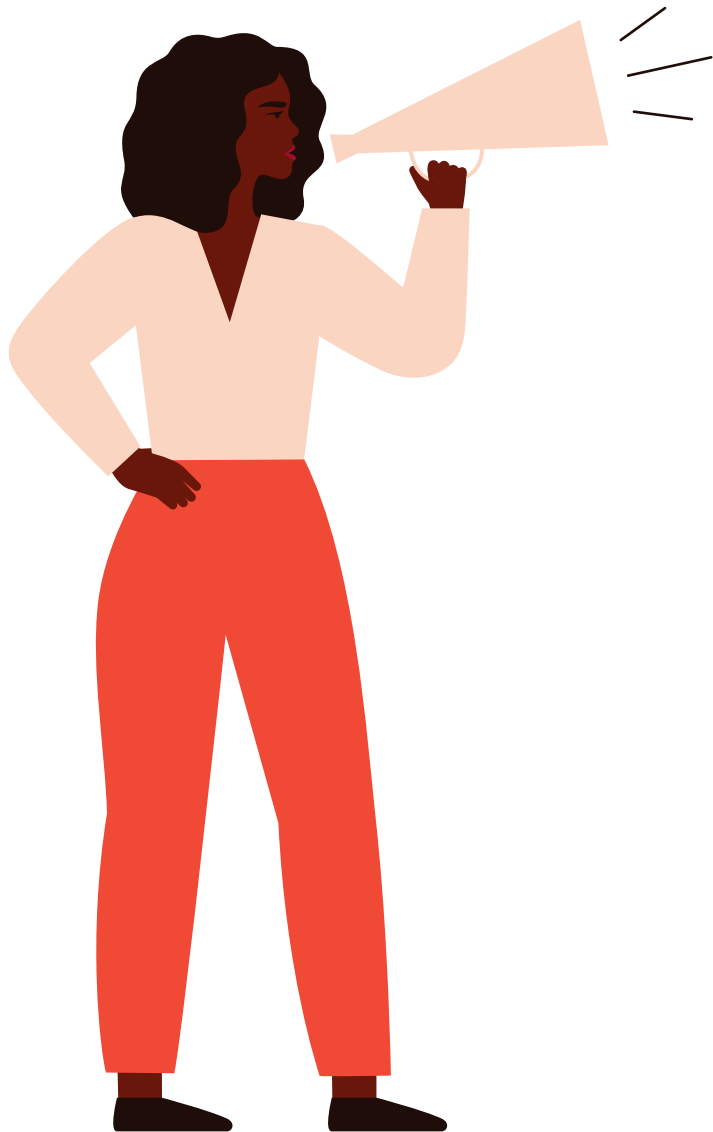
Please be confident. Our skills from overseas are comparable to people working here and even more so than most of the trainees as we finished all our degrees and have more clinical experience. This is my first NHS job in one of the largest trusts in the UK. I felt lost initially because of not understanding the system. Believe in yourself and try harder. I am now 10 months into my journey here and feel comfortable at work.

Mya Pwint Phyu

Senior specialist clinical fellow in medical education
(obstetrics and gynaecology)



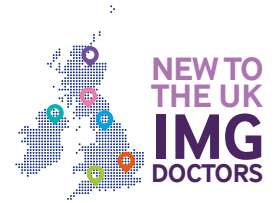
BE CONFIDENT



Speak up for yourself and don't tolerate bad behaviour.

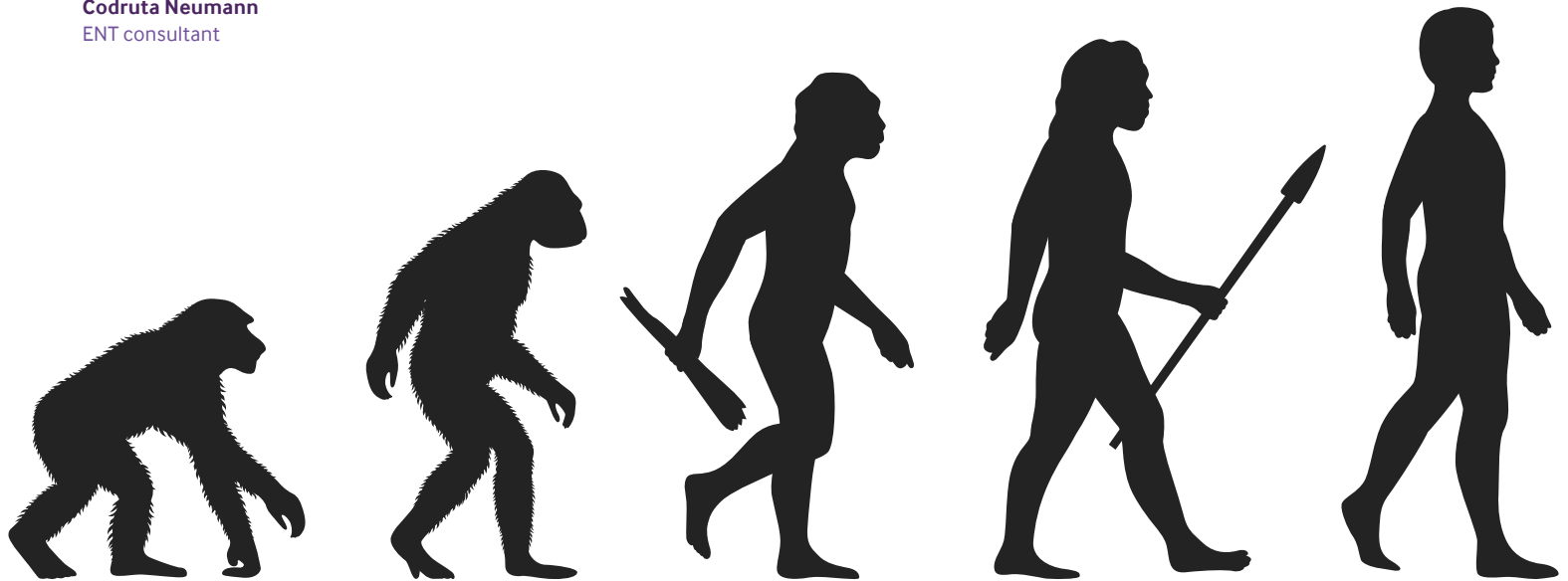
Emem Usoro
ST5 obstetrics and gynaecology

DO SOME READING



Read 'Watching the English' by Kate Fox. Brilliant and funny pop anthropology book. It will give you a shortcut for cultural adaptation that will save years in the process. I wish somebody put that into my hand as soon as I landed in the UK 23 years ago.

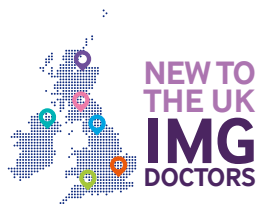
Codruta Neumann
ENT consultant



DO SOME READING

Make sure you read a book on ethics (eg '100 Cases in Clinical Ethics and Law') before you see your first patient.

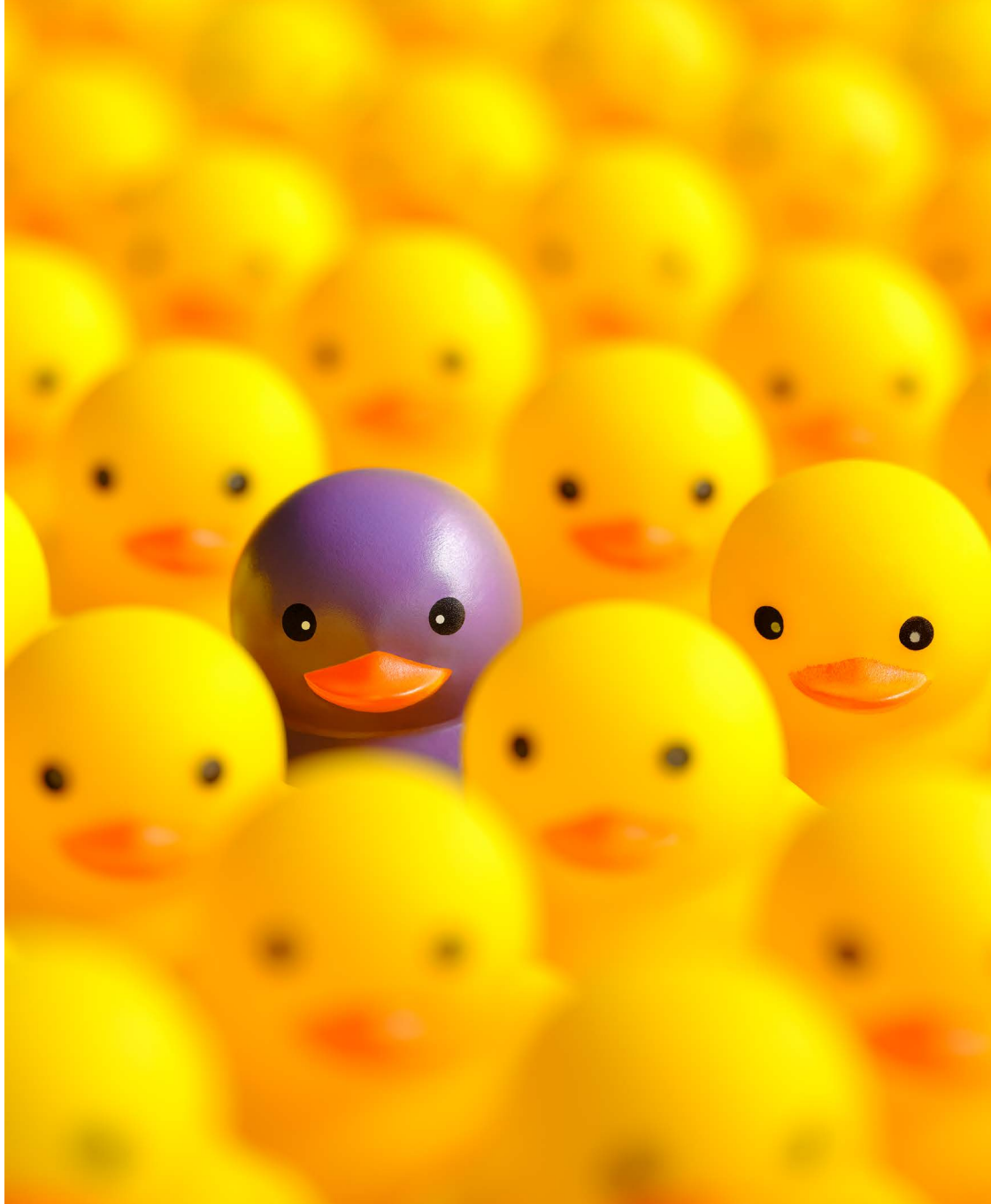
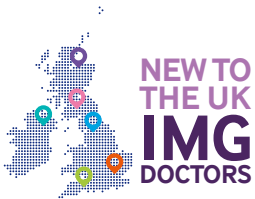
Abilash Sathyanarayanan
ST6 diabetes and endocrinology



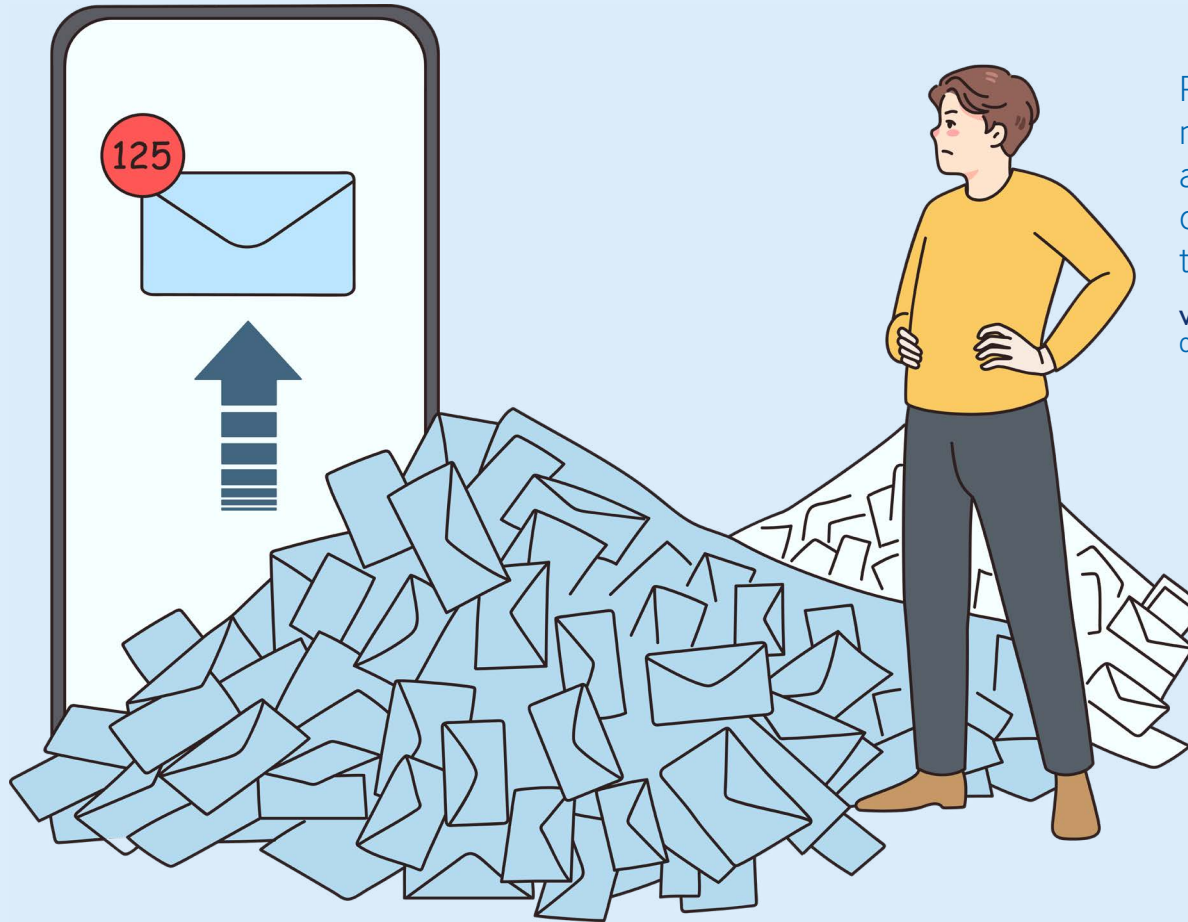
YOUR CAREER

Remember, you're not an outsider; you are now an integral part of a team that likely values your contribution immensely. They are as invested in your success and acclimation as you are. In embracing this journey with an open heart and mind, you'll find that the challenges of today lay the groundwork for a rewarding and enriching professional life in the UK. Welcome to your new adventure. You're not just joining a workplace; you're becoming a vital part of a community that's ready to support you every step of the way.

Edgar Brincat
PICU consultant



IMPORTANT ADMIN



Please don't ignore any messages about appraisal and revalidation since it is connected to your licence to practise in the UK.

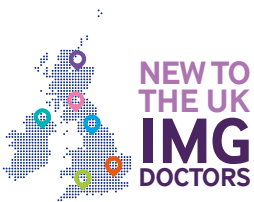
Vinod Gadiyar

Consultant in anaesthesia and pain medicine

IMPORTANT ADMIN

Don't wait until your first due payday to check with HR and payroll that all your details are correct and that you will be paid the correct amount on time.

Kate Potter
Radiologist



BE KIND TO YOURSELF

It's completely normal to feel overwhelmed and out of your depth. Please be kind to yourself and patient with yourself and don't be afraid to ask for help and support.

Sonia Roy
Consultant psychiatrist



BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Take your breaks somewhere outside the department for your initial days and do positive self-talk and reflections for yourself. Have at least one detox day every week and pretend you are a tourist and forget about work for the sake of your mental health.

Humaira Qasim
Junior clinical fellow



TAKE NOTES



Write down any difficulties, problems and questions, and identify an experienced UK doctor to talk them through with regularly.

Victoria Savage
Consultant psychiatrist



TAKE NOTES

Bring ALL logbook evidence from your country of qualification, and keep accurate documents of all your experience and training. It is necessary for both CESR pathway AND for accelerating training toward CCT.

Vina Manjunath
Consultant



TAKE NOTES



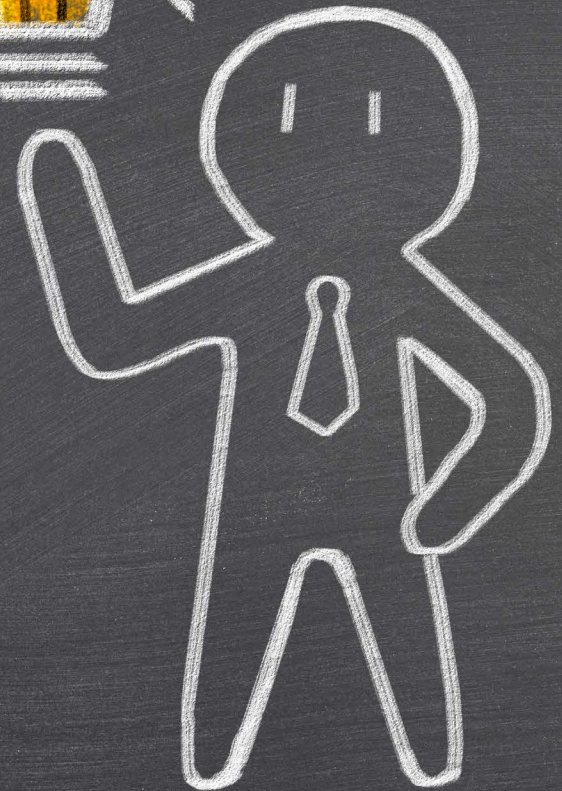
Maintain accurate records of your practice at all times, and ensure that your clinical notes and correspondence are preserved, and readily accessible as potential medico-legal evidence for years to come.

Olufunke Adedeji
Consultant in public health medicine

INSIGHT, INTEGRITY, COURAGE



There are only three qualities a good doctor needs: insight into the limits of your knowledge and technical skills, integrity to do the correct thing for your patients, colleagues and the NHS and, courage to take difficult decisions, be it clinical or professional, when they are needed. Unlike some cultures, respect for the position of a doctor in the NHS is not automatic and has to be earned.



Mike Basler
Retired consultant anaesthetist

YOUR DEVELOPMENT

Make yourself at home! I would advise you to go to work at your work, but make sure you get more out of work than your salary. Get professional advancement too. Attend conferences, engage in CPD (continuous professional development) activities, do courses outside the mandatory training – the NHS has ample. Ask for management and administrative roles where possible, do audits and QIPs that matter to your trust, be open to relationships with other professionals. Finally, be determined to have a great time!

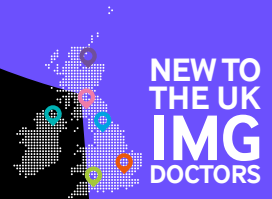
Chimdimma Ozongwu
Trust grade doctor



YOUR DEVELOPMENT

Focus on CPD right from the first day of work. Keep eyes and ears open, be prepared to learn from both senior and junior colleagues, particularly how they communicate with patients, families and with each other.

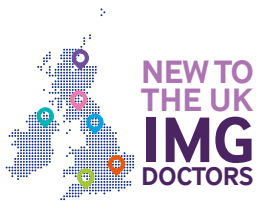
S Subramonia
Consultant



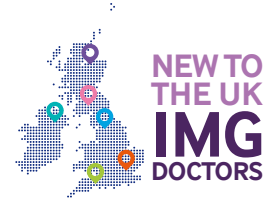
ASK, ASK, ASK

Welcome to the UK as an IMG. If you do not understand something do not hesitate to ask. Not everyone understands each other's accents and it is okay not to. Do not feel ashamed of it. Never feel inferior and assume that your views do not matter. I became a consultant in the same hospital where I started attachment after 15 years, which I dreamed of when I was doing the attachment. If you work hard and set your mind to it, the sky is the limit.

Lokapriya Arunachalam Premalatha
Consultant psychiatrist



ASK, ASK, ASK



Be a sponge. See how your colleagues and other health professionals work around you and be open to learn from everyone – not just doctors or consultants. Senior consultants are usually more approachable so please do ask them if there are any issues or questions no matter how basic. Don't shy away from seeking help!

Sonal Tripathi
Radiology consultant

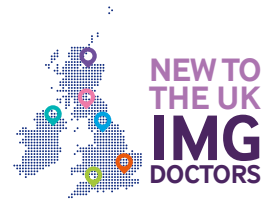


EXPLORE YOUR NEW HOME

Join the National Trust so that you can visit great British houses wherever you work in the UK.

Tony Barabas

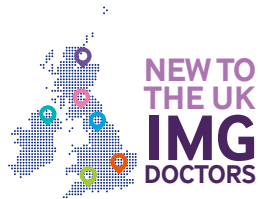
Consultant plastic surgeon



EXPLORE YOUR NEW HOME

Beginning a new job in a new town or city can be stressful, even more so if it is a new country as well. Cities are not always the most relaxing places to live. However, many UK cities are close to open countryside and the country is blessed with many public footpaths, cycle tracks and trails open to all. Organisations like The Ramblers: Britain's walking charity, can provide helpful advice on accessing the countryside. In addition, every city and many towns will have a museum or art gallery. They should provide some insight into the place where you're living and working. Apart from special exhibitions, most of the UK's museums and art galleries are free to visit.

Mala Rao
Public Health Academic



MAKE CONNECTIONS

Talk to people at your workplace and seek help. As IMGs we've all had similar journeys; it's worth reaching out to IMG doctors from respective regions to see how they could advise or signpost you. Remember, what you're going through or feeling or finding challenging is similar to all those who've been through this earlier. Good luck.

Misbah Mohammad
Consultant



MAKE CONNECTIONS



Get involved locally with your community through other staff, through your kid's school, through a local church, through a sports club, evening class, allotment or mother's group. If not fluent in English, take lessons and try to use what you have learned the next day. Find someone to mentor you, and offer to help a consultant or GP trainer with research, to write up or present a case, audit or study.

Will Sellar

Retired consultant ophthalmologist

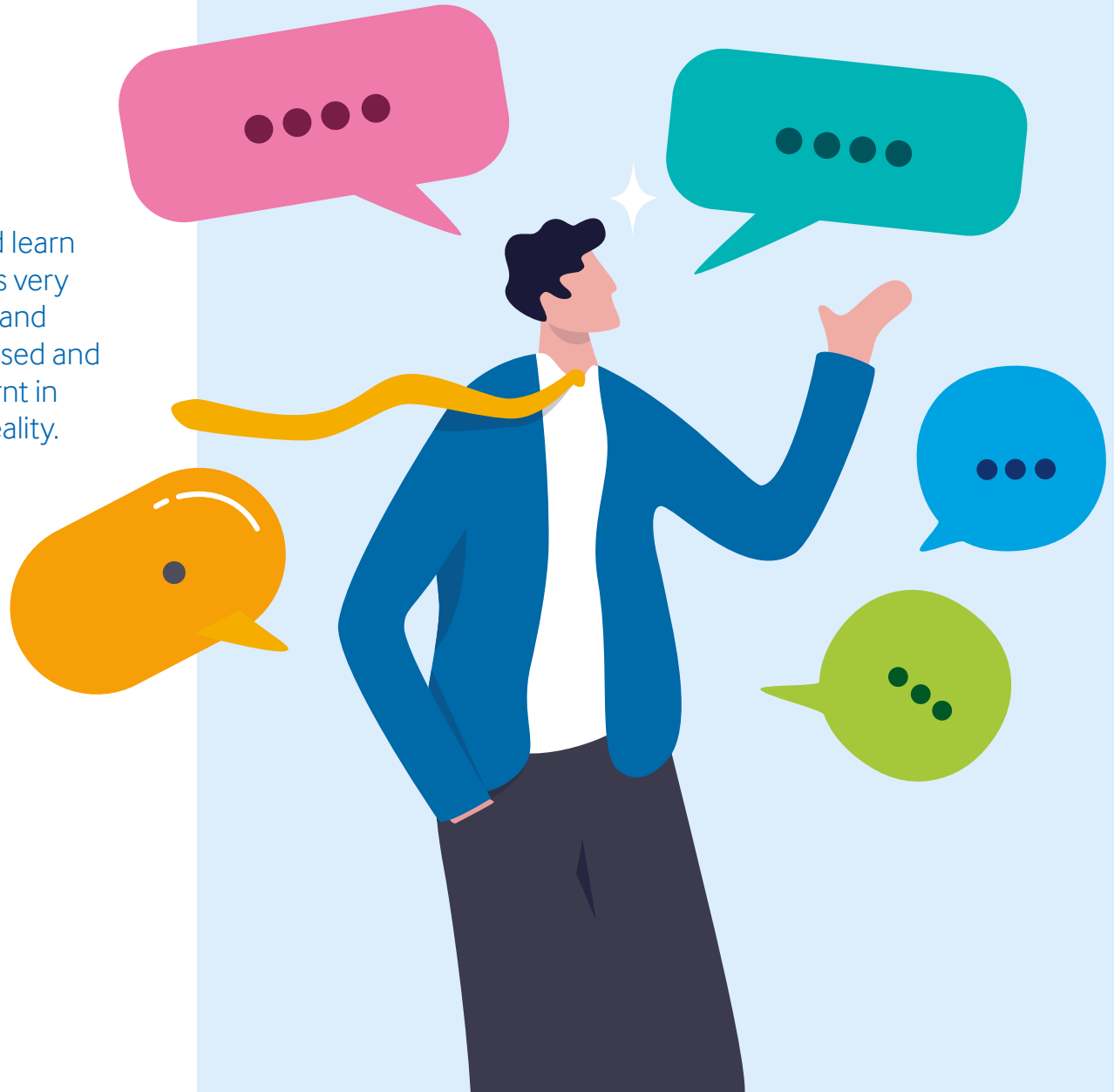


YOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS

Forget your IELTS score and learn English language again – it's very important that you understand how certain things are phrased and expressed. What you've learnt in school is very different to reality.

Bayad Nozad

Consultant in health protection



THE BRITISH BEING BRITISH

British people often avoid saying no. Look out for replies like: 'I'll need to check my diary/with my wife/husband/partner' or 'I'll see what I can do'. Sometimes they reflect an intention true to the words, but often they just mean 'no' in a way that British people consider polite. It can be difficult to work out which is which.

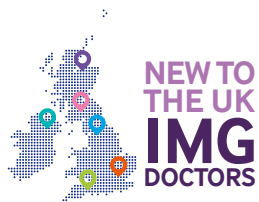
Christine Range
Consultant



THE BRITISH BEING BRITISH

Don't be worried if your English colleagues do not invite you to their homes for meals – we are not as hospitable as we should be.

John Gardner
Specialist



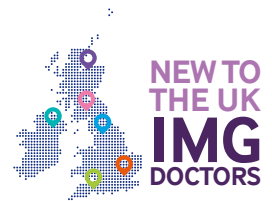


SHARE YOURSELF

The UK is a great place to work and learn but no one knows what your experience is unless you tell them, so don't be shy – start talking to the people in your teams from day one about the many fascinating differences between your training and theirs, your culture and theirs, the patients you have previously seen and the ones you are seeing now. We can all learn from each other and professional curiosity and a willingness to share the richness of your experience is hugely valuable.

Susanne Caesar

GP, CEO and director Wessex Appraisal Service Ltd



ACCLIMATISING TO THE UK

Coming into the UK can be quite challenging at first, considering this might be a completely new environment for some, like it was for me. New apartment, new place of work, new co-workers, different weather; sometimes you may even have to overhaul your wardrobe to cope with the cold. However, over time, it gets much better. You will be able to relate better with your co-workers as you have more understanding of the inter-professional relationships among healthcare workers here in the UK. You will begin to settle into the British culture, and that brings more confidence in how you communicate. Most importantly, always ask questions when you are curious or unsure about anything.

Oyindamola
Core trainee



ACCLIMATISING TO THE UK



Always remain in touch with loved ones by call or message as moving to a new country can make you homesick. But once you settle in, you'll make friends and feel comfortable fairly quickly, in a few weeks or so.

Melissa Lora Alvares

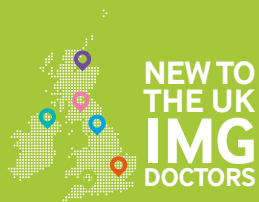
ST1-2/ LAS doctor in GUM/HIV at Imperial College Healthcare Trust



ACCLIMATISING TO THE UK

Immerse yourself in English culture. Be as polite as you can. Don't be discouraged by small failures or disagreements with colleagues. Being yourself, kind, and nice will take you a long way.

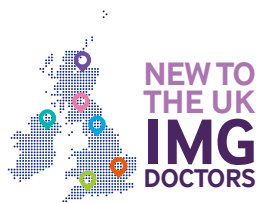
Shih-Ting Chen
GPST



THE BMA

I advise international doctors to join the BMA and do not hesitate to ask for advice and help on any matter.

Khadija Masood
Consultant psychiatrist

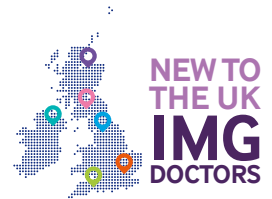




THE BMA

Buddy up with a UK trainee and read the IMG section on the BMA website.

Pouya Alaghband
Consultant



THE BMA

Be a BMA member and member of the Medical Defence Union from day one of practice as a doctor in UK.

Abhishek Shah
Senior clinical fellow

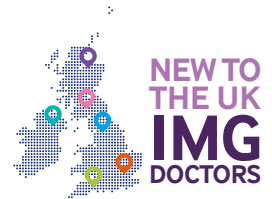




THE BMA

Find a helpful mentor and get to know your rights (you have many). Don't just put your head down and work hard, work smart. Join the BMA and get involved in your local negotiating committees.

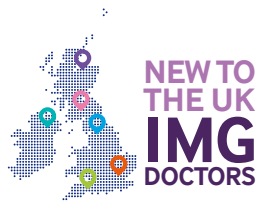
Asad Khan
Associate specialist



SHARE YOURSELF

Talk to your colleagues over coffee or lunch, share your experiences in life, they can learn from you as you can from them. Try not to shut yourself away and become isolated.

David Hickson
GP locum

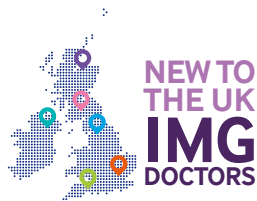




YOU ARE WELCOME

Welcome to the UK! Be part of this great family and be proud of yourselves. It's a great place, a great profession and with dedication, diligence and love you can all fly high.

Cassia Gagliardi
Locum



Join the BMA

We are the voice of all medical students and doctors, BMA membership empowers you to focus on your job, secure in the knowledge you'll never face any issues alone.



Take advantage of everything BMA membership has to offer

bma.org.uk

Wellbeing support services

COUNSELLING | PEER SUPPORT
0330 123 1245

bma.org.uk/yourwellbeing

There is always someone you can talk to...



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