

BMA Cymru Wales comments on correspondence from Chair of the Senedd Cymru Health and Social Care Committee to Chair of the Petitions Committee

Introduction

The BMA is a professional association and trade union representing and negotiating on behalf of all doctors and medical students in the UK. It is a leading voice advocating for outstanding health care and a healthy population. It is an association providing members with excellent individual services and support throughout their lives.

Comments

We are pleased the petition has been considered by the Petitions Committee, and we are grateful to the Chair for bringing it to the attention of the Health and Social Care Committee.

The BMA hosted a Senedd reception in July, hosted by Russell George MS, highlighting the latest state of affairs within General Practice in Wales, and we were delighted to receive support in person from members from across the Senedd. At this event, we launched an [updated campaign pamphlet](#) and [short film](#), underlining the stark reality of 100 GP practice closures since 2012, as funding has not fairly matched rising costs to keep practices running. As was recognised by the DDRB in their report, recent uplifts to the value of the GP contract haven't been sufficient in terms of expenses to realise the recommendations on GP pay.

The BMA Cymru Wales is satisfied that the Health and Social Care Committee will now look to explore the issues raised by the petition in its forward workplan going into autumn 2024. We support this, and are hopeful this work will result in a full inquiry into the key issues facing general practice as highlighted in the Save our Surgeries campaign, including:

- Funding and resourcing
- Workforce
- Wellbeing.

Delayed GMS Contract negotiations

At the time of writing, Welsh Government is yet commence its tripartite GMS (General Medical Services) contract negotiations for 2024-25 with GPC Wales.

In July 2024, the BMA along with other healthcare professional representatives received a letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care confirming the delay of the 24/25 contract negotiations until after the summer recess. The reasons cited were twofold: firstly, that the Doctors and Dentist Pay Review body (DDR) report was imminent and Welsh Government intended to work with other administrations to align



publication of the recommendations. Secondly, the intent to have early conversations with the new UK Government regarding its plans for longer-term sustainable funding for the NHS.

GPC Wales has been fully prepared to begin negotiations since the spring and the joint 'mandate' for negotiations agreed between all parties, however this is yet to receive sign off by the Cabinet Secretary. The delays have been not only disappointing, but intensely and extremely frustrating and likely to create uncertainty for practices already under immense financial pressures. The first order of business for the incoming permanent Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care must be to sign off the contract mandate and allow negotiations to commence.

We have been clear in our [recent open letter to the First Minister](#) that delayed and protracted negotiations, as seen last year, cannot happen again due to the uncertainties this caused for practices. We are actively preparing for all eventualities that could arise, including the declaration of a dispute should we be unable to reach agreement within a reasonable timeframe.