

GUIDANCE ON THE NEW PRIMARY CARE DEVELOPMENT SCHEME: ENGLAND ONLY GUIDANCE

On 31st March 2005 the Golden Hello Scheme in England ceased. This has been replaced by the Primary Care Development Scheme (PCDS). The GPC previously agreed with the Health Department that the Golden Hello scheme should be revised to target under-doctored areas, and our negotiations for a revised scheme (which began in the autumn of 2004) were completed earlier this year.

The following explains the new scheme, and the action that we suggest LMCs take.

- The objective of the PCDS is to improve the number of GPs working in difficult to recruit doctors and deprived locations. Funding will therefore be targeted at areas that have the greatest recruitment difficulties in general practice.
- The allocation of money to SHAs for the PCDS has been nationally agreed. A national framework for how the money should be allocated to PCTs and spent locally has also been agreed, and details of this are available on the DH website.
- SHAs have been allocated a sum of money for the PCDS. Not all SHAs will receive the same amount. The allocation is weighted to those areas with greatest difficulties in recruitment. A lead PCT should be identified to administer this scheme. Through their lead PCT, each SHA should consult with their PCTs, LMCs and GP postgraduate deanery to determine how the funding is allocated to each PCT. We recommend that LMCs contact their SHA/lead PCT as soon as possible to arrange a meeting to discuss this. LMCs may also wish to discuss the preferred way of distributing the money across PCTs with the deanery on an informal basis and in advance of meeting with the lead PCT.
- In determining the PCT areas to be targeted, the following factors should be considered:
 - the number of GPs per 100,000 weighted population
 - difficulty of filling vacancies
 - the proportion of GPs aged 55 and over
 - other locally agreed factors.
- The next stage is to determine how the money will be spent/allocated by individual PCTs. LMCs and deaneries should be involved in a consultation with each PCT on how the money allocated to that PCT should be spent to improve the recruitment of GPs in the area. LMC consultations with individual PCTs can begin before the allocations to PCTs have been finalised. LMCs may also wish to discuss the preferred way of spending/distributing the money with the deanery informally and in advance of meeting with the PCT.
- The following are ways in which the PCDS funding may be spent:
 - financial incentives to GPs being recruited in an area where it is difficult to recruit doctors
 - to support practices that find it difficult to recruit GPs in order to help them to recruit
 - to provide personal and professional development opportunities; for example to allow a GP to develop a special interest that will help the local population
 - with local agreement, to support improvements in skill mix to facilitate GP recruitment.

It is recognised that personal financial incentives may not always be appropriate, or the only way, to recruit to under-doctored areas. Different and innovative ways of using the money are allowed provided that it is used for GP recruitment in under-doctored areas.

- The DH framework makes reference to the fact that the PCDS may support measures to tackle health inequalities. This support should be a by-product of the new scheme and not the aim which is to help GP recruitment. PCTs should not be using this money for any other purpose.
- Other appropriate funding streams may be used to supplement the PCDS funding. However, the PCDS allocation is not intended to be used to fund non-GP recruitment initiatives.
- Please note that, in accord with the announcement last year, GPs were only be eligible for the Golden Hello scheme payments if they started work on or before 31 March 2005 (provided, of course, that they met the eligibility criteria for the GH scheme). For new GP recruits there is no guarantee that a financial incentive payment will be forthcoming, as how the PCDS money is spent will be a local decision based on the national framework.
- The GPC would welcome any comments or information from LMCs about the functioning of the scheme. We are particularly concerned to ensure that the money is properly targeted to encourage GP recruitment and will take up any examples of where this is not the case with the Department of Health. Please direct your comments and/or information to your LMC liaison officer in the GPC office.