



ADVICE PACK FOR FREELANCE GP LOCUMS

Part of the RCGP's First5 initiative



Royal College of
General Practitioners

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Welcome to this pack produced specifically for newly qualified GPs starting off as freelance locum GPs First5 members of the Royal College of General Practitioners. ”

Why this pack?

Working as a GP locum across several different PCOs, each served by various acute trusts, in many different practices, in even more different consulting rooms, with no patient having any prior relationship with you, using IT systems you're unfamiliar with and haven't been trained to use, accessing patient records written by other, probably unfamiliar, GPs, seeing nearly each patient for the first and last time, requires many skills that will have been unfamiliar during your training.

Being a sessional GP means you can choose the practices with which you want to work; choose your hours (more or less); work out the areas you like; be enterprising in ways which suit you; and you're joining a network of supportive colleagues.

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

There are 3 ways to work as a locum:

1. Independent Freelance GP

You're the boss! You're self-employed and take full responsibility for all marketing, advertising, booking, banking, clinical governance, education, superannuation payments - everything!

Getting started

You need to have completed training and be in possession of your CCT/CEGPR certificate and be on your local Performers' List in order to work at all from August (and the performers list of any other nearby areas you might want to work in; you just tick the box on the back of the form and your local area passes on your details so it's slightly easier than getting on the local area where you need to have loads of documents).

You will also need up-to-date GMC registration and medico-legal defence union membership.

Readers working in Scotland please note that with some defence unions it is cheaper to work in Scotland than England, so make sure you pay the correct rate.

It is worthwhile putting together a pack consisting of your CV and originals (or good quality copies) of your GMC/defence union/PMETB certificate – each practice you go to for the first time needs to make a photocopy of these documents for their records. Also include your most recent CRB check if applicable. You can get some presentation wallets to keep the papers in and it will look professional and keep you organised.

Getting work

Write to all practices in the area - this is worthwhile and your local PCO/health board should have a list of local GP's on their website. It might also be worth getting business cards done to give a professional impression.

As time goes on you will generally find that practices will contact you directly as it saves them hassle and money and they know what you're like. Don't be disheartened at first if it seems difficult getting work, it takes a few months to get established in a new area. A few months down the line you will be turning down work because you're already busy.

2. Chambers GP

Chambers are locally-based teams of local locums, run by the locums who employ several staff to manage all their work for them and have a regular program of education and clinical governance. Because all the members remain self-employed, they maintain their ability to contribute to NHS superannuation. Their managers take over the running of all the non-clinical aspects of being a GP, such as handling all bookings, banking, meetings, clinical governance etc. Members are required to attend regular team meetings and discuss clinical governance issues. See the NASGP website area for advice on setting up your own chambers.

[NASGP Locum Support Team](#)

3. Agency GP

Agencies tend to be large commercial organisations who actually employ their locum GPs (meaning these locums can't then contribute their work through the agency to the NHS Superannuation Scheme) and pass work to their GPs as and when practices approach them. Because of their wide geographical spread and the fact that locums can join as many agencies as they wish, they don't *tend* to provide educational support.

www.locum123.com
www.medacs.co.uk
www.cblocums.com
www.nasgp.org.uk/

MAKING A SUCCESS OF A SESSIONAL CAREER



GP Profile

These are helpful cards with patient and practice-friendly information designed to strike a balance between readability and providing enough information for patients to familiarise themselves with the new GP they're about to see.

Patients need to trust their GP, and a large part of this is them having a relationship with their GP. These GP profiles provide information to patients on the GP they are about to see, handed to them at reception from the practice staff. The information includes some background to the training and experience of the GP, a paragraph about their professional interests and finishes with some insight into their personal lives.

They can be laminated to make them last, have a reminder that the consultation is for 10 minutes only and are to be handed back to the receptionist or GP after the consultation.

This GP Profile has been kindly provided by Pallant Medical Chambers as an example.

<p><i>The Freelance GP you are seeing today is</i></p> <p>Dr Peter Griffin MBBS MRCP DRCOG DFFP</p> 	<hr/> <p>This appointment is for 10 minutes unless otherwise arranged</p> <hr/> <p>Dr Griffin is a member of Pallant Medical Chambers. Our members meet regularly to improve their quality of care using feedback, education and peer/professional support.</p> <hr/> <p>Please hand this card back to Dr Fieldhouse or one of the practice's receptionists</p> <hr/>
<hr/> <p>Write in the first person – when did you qualify? Which Medical School. Where did you do your hospital and GP training?</p> <hr/> <p>Briefly, what are your special interests? Write using simple language e.g. write 'skin conditions' rather than dermatology.</p> <hr/> <p>Give some brief personal details – family, kids, hobbies; enough to inform the patient, but not too exciting to keep them talking for too long!</p> <hr/>	 <p>PALLANT Medical <i>Chambers</i></p> <p>:: freelance gp services ::</p>
<p>© Pallant Medical Chambers</p>	<p>© Pallant Medical Chambers</p>

Name badges & door plates

In your training post, even towards the end of your training, you would have come across members of staff or other associated health professionals who didn't know who you were. As a freelance GP locum you'll be in this position just about every day, so the importance of being able to identify yourself is important. Think about taking your own name badges and doorplates to take from practice to practice.

Getting yourself known to practices

By far the simplest way to let local practices know you're available for locum work is to join a locally based established group of locums. Some local groups send an email to practices about members' availability, or distribute availability of sessions..

Sample covering letter as a freelance locum

Dear

My name is Dr Peter Griffin and I am writing to introduce myself as a freelance GP.

I am available to provide locum cover to practices in and around XXX area. I enclose a copy of my GP Profile as well as my terms and conditions which I hope you will find competitive.

If you would like to engage my services or indeed would like any more information, then please contact me on 01234 567890 or email info@email.org.uk. I would be very happy to provide references upon request..

Yours sincerely

- Attach your full CV
- Attach your GP Profile

Sample covering letter for your chambers

Dear

My name is Dr Peter Griffin and I am a member of [*name of chambers*] Medical Chambers, a group of freelance GP's working together to provide locum cover to over 150 practices in [*area covered*].

As a member of this chambers, I am available to provide locum cover to practices in and around this area. I enclose a copy of my GP Profile as well as the [*name of chambers*] rates (all of which are fully inclusive).

All [*name of chambers*] Medical Chambers members are fully qualified GP's who have been carefully selected through a process of interviews and collection of references by our clinical directors. If you would like to find out more about us, our members and the services we offer then please feel free to browse our website at [www.\[name of chambers\].org.uk](http://www.[name of chambers].org.uk).

If you would like to book me or indeed would like any more information, then please contact our Chambers Manager on 01234 567890 or email info@email.org.uk. Our managers have instant 'live' access to my calendar so can book and confirm requests immediately.

Yours sincerely

- Attach your full CV
- Attach your GP Profile

Feedback forms

Getting proper formal feedback from practices, hospitals, colleagues and patients is the Holy Grail of professional development as a locum GP. One of the key reasons for having adapted the chambers model was so that we could work as professional GPs in a managed environment. Working in many different practices, the feedback forms, though important, aren't as critical as the systems and processes that support them.

Patient feedback

You're at an immediate disadvantage as a locum as it's unlikely the patient will know anything about you. Cue the GP profile! Don't even consider asking for feedback if they don't know who you are.

Our advice is to make sure you know that the patient has read your profile *before* you give them the blank feedback form.

Essential = GP Profile

Colleague feedback

It may well be that the practice manager or other GPs can't quite remember you, which is one extremely good reason to absolutely insist that for every practice you work in you are given a confidential username and password. Without it, no one can know how good a GP you've been! As an independent locum it can be quite a struggle ensuring that practices give you unique login details.

Essential = unique usernames and passwords

Hospital/referral Feedback

As a locum, it's unlikely you'll find out the outcome of many of the referrals you do. You may wish to consider a simple feedback form to accompany referral letters, complete with accompanying instructions so that you can collect the responses. The practice managers post these back with the invoice payments at the end of the month and forward them to the relevant member.

TAX AND PENSION

Income tax first. You will have to register as self-employed, which includes paying different national insurance contributions and filling in your own tax return. There is a fine if you don't register within a short time scale of becoming self-employed.

www.hmrc.gov.uk

It's advisable to put aside 25-30% of one's of income, NET of pension contributions, for income tax purposes. You should seek independent financial advice on what to do with the money you put aside.

Get an accountant.

www.aisma.org.uk

GPs are in a unique position; we are the only self-employed workers entitled to a state-run pension. So far your superannuation has been taken automatically off your pay (as was your income tax). In England you will now deal with the NHS Pensions Agency regarding your pension, in Scotland you deal with the Scottish Public Pensions Agency, SPPA. You pay to them 6% of 90% of your gross locum earnings (10% is deducted for 'professional expenses'), and the Practitioner Services Division stumps up the other 14%. The percentage contribution you have to make on any out of hours work may vary depending on your local arrangements, so you should check locally.



The image shows a screenshot of a spreadsheet titled 'GP Locum's superannuation and tax calculation spreadsheet'. The spreadsheet is divided into several sections. At the top, there are fields for 'GP Locum's name', 'GP Locum's address', and 'GP Locum's telephone number'. Below this, there are columns for 'Date', 'Shift', 'Gross Locum Earnings', 'Professional Expenses', 'Net Locum Earnings', and 'Superannuation Contribution'. The spreadsheet contains several rows of data, with a yellow highlight on the 'Superannuation Contribution' column. At the bottom of the spreadsheet, there is a summary section with a yellow background, showing the total gross locum earnings, total professional expenses, total net locum earnings, and total superannuation contribution.

There's an easy to use spreadsheet which includes "Locum A" and "Locum B" on the NASGP website

www.nasgp.org.uk/superannuation

You will need to fill in a 'Form A' for each shift (or group of shifts at the same practice) done, which a partner or manager signs for you, and you total your Form As onto a Form B. You repeat the same for out of hours work, albeit on Form SOLO which the OOH provider should do.

All the forms are submitted to the Practitioner Services Division for your host PCO or Health Board Area along with a cheque for your contribution (6% of 90%). Generally this has to be done in the first week of

NASGP spreadsheet

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

You can't work if you're not well. You're a GP – you know the signs. There are a number of organisations which can help in a number of ways.

Practitioner Health Programme

W: <http://www.php.nhs.uk/>

T: 0203 049 4505

Sick Doctors Trust (For those with dependency problems)

W: <http://www.sick-doctors-trust.co.uk/>

T: 0370 444 5163

Doctors for Doctors

T: 08459 200 169

Doctors Support line

W: <http://www.dsn.org.uk/>

T: 0844 395 3010 (Evening Telephone Service)

British Doctors and Dentists Group (for those with a dependency problem)

W: <http://bddg.org/>

T: 0779 2819 966

NHS-Direct

W: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

T: 0845 46 47

BMA Counselling Service

W: http://www.bma.org.uk/doctors_health/D4Dabout.jsp

T: 0845 920 0169

Samaritans

W: www.samaritans.org.uk

T: 08457 90 90 90

TOP TIPS

Tip

Be organised!

Get a personal username and password to all systems at a practice

Dress appropriately

Be armed with information

Take care of you

Network

Why?

You will appear professional and life will be less stressful!

Don't accept ones which have been used previously. Why? So that consultations, prescriptions and events are attributable to someone – the right someone.

You want to be taken seriously by patients and colleagues. Appropriate work wear will help.

CV; GP Profile; door plate

Meet others in your position. Join local groups and stay connected. Peers can help with work appointments, CPD, support, mentoring and wellbeing.

CV TEMPLATE

JOE BLOGGS

Address: 10 The Street
The Town
The County
Post code

GMC No:

Medical Indemnity No:

Contact telephone:

Email:

There is no need to state nationality, date of birth or marital status however you can do so if you wish

CAREER STATEMENT

What's your USP as a GP? What can you bring to a team/consultation room? What do you pride yourself on? Why should a practice employ you over another freelance GP locum?

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Diplomas:

Professional memberships:

Primary Medical Qualification:

Some employers look for professional memberships i.e. Royal Colleges, particularly overseas.

CURRENT COMMITMENTS

CAREER HISTORY

CLINICAL SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

REFEREES

Why Pallant Medical Chambers?

Pallant Medical Chambers was established in 2006 by a small group of locums in West Sussex who adapted the NASGP's ['Locum Support Team'](#) concept, pooling a proportion of their income to provide a team of managers and support from clinical directors, with members working in small teams or 'chambers', each led by a nominated GP 'chamber's Lead'.

Having worked as locums for 10 years prior to starting the chambers, and with 6 years under their belts of having created what the NHS Revalidation Team has described as a "*...groundbreaking organisation [that] not only elevates the standing of your doctors, it also sets example to the practices that engage you about how to achieve high quality*", they've put together some useful information for independent locums to help you work in as safely and effectively as possible.

Offers from Pallant Medical Chambers:

Pallant Medical Chambers provide a set of professional name badges and doorplates for their members to carry around with them and fasten to their lapels and consulting room doors. In particular, they make sure the door plates show our members qualifications too.

First5 members can order a complete set of name badges, door plates, GP profiles from the [Pallant Medical website](#)

- package of 2 nameplates 2 badges and 20 GP Profiles for £58 inc P&P and VAT
- package of 1 nameplates 1 badges and 20 GP Profiles for £47 inc P&P and VAT
- 20 GP Profiles only £27 inc P&P and VAT