NEWS

Government could fire and rehire consultants to introduce new contract, says BMA

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The government could fire and rehire consultants in order to move them on to a new contract, the BMA has said.

Delegates at the BMA's annual UK consultants' conference in London on 3 March heard that this could be one option considered by the government if consultants rejected its final contract offer.

The government has yet to announce a firm offer for changes, but Rob Harwood, the BMA Consultants Committee deputy chair for negotiations said that, once that offer was received, the BMA would survey members for their views. "We need to know what members think," he said. "That's a powerful message to send back to the secretary of state. It would demonstrate that the BMA was in touch with its members and following their instructions and wishes."

Harwood said that, if consultants didn't agree with the suggested changes, the government could advise foundation trusts to introduce the new contract for newly appointed consultants. "Imposing change on existing contract holders is more difficult,"

he said. "So the government has to use options like fire and rehire—sack you all and appoint you a minute later on a new contract with presumably less advantageous terms and conditions, or even change the law around contracts."

Harwood added, "What they almost certainly would do if people don't accept an offer is look at our existing contracts and decide that there would be no pay uplifts, no updates to the contracts, and uncertainty around clinical excellence awards going forward."

The government's proposed changes to the consultant contract include the removal of the clause that allows consultants to opt out of non-emergency out-of-hours work, and plans to replace clinical excellence awards with a different scheme.¹

1 Rimmer A. Consultants oppose government proposals for contract changes. BMJ Careers 2016.

http://careers.bmj.com/careersadvice/Consultants_oppose_government_proposals_for_contract_changes&articleType=news

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