

New reforms to make consultant awards fairer and more accessible

Press release

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- New reforms aim to further drive and encourage excellence, recognising the national impact and extraordinary work of senior doctors and dentists in all disciplines, from all backgrounds, including during the pandemic.
- Awards to be renamed National Clinical Impact Awards and will increase access from underrepresented groups with the next round opening in April 2022.

High-performing consultant level doctors, dentists and academic GPs in England and Wales will benefit from a newly reformed awards scheme, which better reflects the modern NHS workforce whilst remaining relevant to the increasingly varied roles doctors undertake.

The National Clinical Excellence Awards scheme has existed since 1948 with the present iteration running since 2004. Through the scheme Consultants and academic practitioners within the NHS who perform above and beyond the standard expected of their role can gain financial awards.

From April 2022 the scheme will be renamed the National Clinical Impact Awards, and to create a more inclusive and accessible scheme a range of reforms are being introduced to this year's application process including:

- Awards for those working less than full time will be paid at the full value instead of pro-rata. This will help address the impact of National Clinical Impact Awards on the gender pay gap in medicine as women are more likely to be working part-time. This is one of the recommendations from the Independent Review of the Gender Pay Gap in Medicine

commissioned by the government;

- all award levels will be open to all applicants as the requirement to move up through the tiers of awards over subsequent years will be removed. This will help ensure outstanding contributions from younger consultants are equitably recognised;
- awards will continue to be held for five years but reapplication after this will be assessed in open competition against new applicants to create a more level playing field and reduce bias towards older, established award holders. By removing the need to progress through award stages, outstanding national clinical impact will be recognised appropriately regardless of career stage;
- the scheme will move from four award levels to three and the first award level will become more attainable. There are more awards available at each level than in previous years, meaning that overall more people should – providing they reach the threshold – be able to achieve an award: roughly 330 at level one, 200 at level two and 70 at level three;
- employers will not need to contribute to recipient's pension funds to reflect modern remuneration arrangements and align with the Local Clinical Excellence Awards, this will also allow for more awards to become available; and
- refreshed assessment criteria will reflect modern consultant careers and recognise contributions from under-represented groups including allowing more flexibility in the type of evidence provided in applications. This will improve accessibility and recognise under-represented specialities that women often undertake. Applicants would be expected to provide evidence that demonstrates their impact on current NHS priorities.

Minister of State for Health Edward Argar said:

The new National Clinical Impact awards will help level the playing field and recognise the extraordinary contributions made by NHS doctors and dentists.

We're increasing the number of people who will be recognised, and making the awards more accessible for under-represented groups including women and younger consultants.

It's vital we celebrate the teachers, trainers, innovators and researchers of best practice across the NHS, who act as role models for their peers and colleagues. I want to thank NHS staff for their hard work and encourage everyone eligible to apply so we can reward

excellence across the health service.

To increase the number of awards available, the value of the awards will decrease slightly with the higher award worth more than the other two levels. This will increase the number of senior clinicians who will hold an award during their professional career.

The existing application process will also be refreshed to be fairer and more inclusive for under-represented groups such as women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds, to ensure the scheme continues to reward national impact and incentivise such excellence across the NHS.

Chair of the Gender Pay Gap Review Professor Dame Jane Dacre said:

I am pleased the new National Clinical Impact Awards will reflect the recommendations made in the gender pay gap review.

I am particularly encouraged to see that those who work part-time (often women), will now be eligible for a full value award as awards will no longer be paid pro-rata. Highlighting the contributions from specialities, such as geriatrics and palliative medicine, with more female staff, will also help keep more talented women working in the NHS. Together these changes will encourage more women to apply for awards.

The causes of the gender pay gap in medicine are complex and these new awards are another step on our path to closing the gap.

The 2022 competition opens to applications in April 2022 with the closing date to be confirmed in due course.

Background information

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