



Government to cover negligence claims against GPs

16 October 2017

Jeremy Hunt, health secretary, has announced that clinical negligence claims against GPs will soon be covered under a scheme backed by the government, in a move to reduce the number of GPs leaving practice due to rising insurance premiums, which would previously have come out of their own pockets.

The new scheme follows the change in the discount rate announced earlier this year, which has increased compensation payments and as such affected already significant premiums for medical professionals (amongst others).

Reports from the medical defence organisation, the Medical Protection Society, indicate that it will continue to offer indemnity cover to GPs for the purpose of inquests, disciplinary proceedings and any non-NHS practice. Another medical defence organisation, the Medical Defence Union, has reported that its GP indemnity costs will be cut by half in response to this future scheme.

Of concern to medical malpractice insurers will be the potential reduction in the market for individual practitioner insureds. We anticipate that once the scheme is introduced, GPs' indemnity needs, which

they would have satisfied via either the open insurance market, or through a medical defence organisation, will be significantly diminished. However, insurers will, like defence organisations, still be able to offer cover for inquests and regulatory proceedings. And a potentially positive piece of news for GPs' current indemnity providers is that the new scheme may cover historic clinical negligence claims.

It may take some time for detail as to the terms (and exclusions) upon which the new coverage will operate to become clear. Jeremy Hunt has predicted a waiting time of up to 18 months for this scheme to be put into place. We shall provide a further update on the suggested scheme following the planned roundtable meetings between the Department of Health and doctors' representatives due to happen within the next month.

Any comments or queries?

Dorothy Flower
Partner

+44 20 3060 6481
dorothy.flower@rpc.co.uk

Kristiana Reynolds
Associate

+44 20 3060 6360
kristiana.reynolds@rpc.co.uk

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