

APPENDIX D

Guarantees given to district medical officers in regard to their position on the abolition of the dispensary system

The Minister for Health has given certain guarantees to district medical officers in the existing general medical service in relation to their position on the abolition of the dispensary service. These guarantees are detailed in the following paragraphs.

Permanent district medical officers

1. The following provisions are proposed as respects persons holding permanent offices of district medical officer on the commencement of the new service:

(i) on the abolition of the dispensary system, any such person will be entitled to participate in the new service, based on the centre or centres from which he is then practising;

(ii) where he occupies a dispensary residence, he will be allowed to continue in occupation on existing conditions as long as he actively participates in the new service in the area concerned. He shall also be entitled to continue to requisition from the health board such medical appliances for use in the course of his practice as he had been entitled to as district medical officer. Where an arrangement existed prior to the commencement of the scheme under which the board paid portion of the cost of telephone rental, the arrangement shall continue for a doctor participating in the service.

(iii) a permanent district medical officer other than one referred to in paragraph 32 shall be guaranteed a basic remuneration which will be adjusted from time to time in the light of changes in the levels of incomes generally in the public service. The guarantee of a basic remuneration is subject to the provisions of paragraph

(iv) an existing permanent district medical officer will retain these special conditions if he should be transferred to another area under the scheme. He will continue to retain the concessions no matter how many moves he may thus make.

(v) sick and annual leave and other leave entitlements of existing permanent district medical officers, will be retained by them in the new scheme.

(vi) a permanent district medical officer participating in the service may, if he chooses, continue to accept his annual salary (appropriately adjusted from time to time) instead of claiming fees for services rendered to eligible persons. If he so opts he will not be obliged to make returns of consultations. He will normally be paid his salary on a monthly basis. The salary will be fully inclusive and he will not be entitled to fees for emergency cases (other than emergency cases dealt with outside his former dispensary district) or temporary residents or for dispensing for patients.

(vii) if he opts not to participate in the service he shall receive the superannuation benefits appropriate to abolition of office. He will have a period of twelve months from the date of commencement of the new scheme in which to avail of the option. If he resigns from the service at a later date, he will be entitled to the usual superannuation benefits only and not to those applicable to abolition of office.

Permanent district medical officers with limited guarantees and temporary district medical officers

2. Permanent medical officers appointed without guarantees in relation to salary or other conditions after the introduction of the new scheme, and temporary district medical officers

with at least two years continuous service in one or more areas will be entitled to participate from their existing centres on the date of commencement of the scheme in their areas.

3. A doctor in this category resident in a dispensary district outside a town of 5,000 or more population will have his income guaranteed for a minimum of 2 1/2 years after the commencement of the scheme provided he continues to serve the district. His guaranteed income will be his existing salary scale and it will be adjusted in the light of any changes in the level of public salaries generally. The health board will be required to give six months notice of the termination of the guarantee. It will be required if possible to state before the end of the second year from the commencement of the scheme whether or not the area concerned is one where there will be an indefinite guarantee of minimum income and in any event to give such a decision to the doctor concerned within three years of the commencement.

4. These categories of district medical officer may, if they so wish, opt to accept the guaranteed salary as full payment for services, in lieu of claiming fees under the scheme, but if they so opt they will be required to keep records of services rendered by them.

5. These categories of district medical officer will during the period of the guarantee continue to be entitled to existing provisions for annual, sick, compassionate, and study leave and time off etc.

6. Where a recently appointed permanent district medical officer is subject to the temporary guarantees outlined in the preceding paragraphs his service prior to and during the period of the guarantee will be pensionable. If at the end of the period of guarantee it is decided that the doctor must be retained in the area, he will remain on in the capacity of a permanent pensionable officer. If it is not regarded as necessary to retain him in the area he will receive compensation on 'abolition' terms.

7. A recently appointed permanent district medical officer in a town of 5,000 population or over who is not eligible for the temporary guarantees will, on the abolition of his office when the scheme commences in his area, also receive whatever compensation would be appropriate to the abolition of his office.

8. A health board may transfer a doctor in this category found to be in a non-viable district to another district in the health board area without competition. Not more than one half of vacant posts in a health board area will be designated for such transfers in consultation with the local representatives of the medical organisations, the remaining posts being retained for open competition. This arrangement will only apply to those doctors shown to be in non-viable areas during the first three years of the scheme in their areas and will not affect the general principle of open competition for posts in the scheme.