

FEBRUARY 1998 AGREEMENT AND OUT OF HOURS ARRANGEMENTS AND PAYMENTS

Title: February 1998 Agreement and Out of Hours Arrangements and Payments

Date: September 1998

Type: Letter

From: Department of Health and Children, Ireland

To: Each GP Unit Manager

Re: February 1998 Agreement and Out of Hours Arrangements and Payments

1. The February 1998 Agreement reflects the ongoing commitment of Management and the Irish Medical Organisation to continue the tradition of quality patient service that both sides are committed to and any reading of the terms of the Agreement should have regard to that fact.

2. This minute is intended simply as a practical clarification of one of the terms of the Agreement, that is the term relating to out-of- Hours Arrangements and Payments.

(i) The rationale for the introduction of Out-of-Hours Arrangements is a recognition that a medical card holder may due to certain **unforeseen** circumstances require a **non-routine** consultation, with his or her General Practitioner, **necessarily** to be carried out outside of the hours that the General Practitioner normally provides his or her scheduled services. The payment for this is a recompense for the social and personal disruption that such **exceptional** situations give rise to.

(ii) The February 1998 Agreement allows a GMS Scheme General Practitioner to change his or her contracted hours with the agreement of the relevant Health Board and it follows from this that the Health Board to which an application is made will seek such information as it considers necessary to make a determination in any case.

(iii) Accordingly, where a GMS Scheme General Practitioner applies for a change of contracted hours he or she will be required to inform the Health Board of the hours that he or she currently provides scheduled surgery services (whether by appointment or otherwise) and the proposed new hours of such scheduled services. If, at the time of application, the General Practitioner concerned contemplates continuing the provision (to any extent) of an evening, weekend or bank holiday scheduled service outside of the intended revised contracted hours this should be made known to the Health Board at the time of application. In that situation, the Health Board, having regard to the fact that any such service must be open equally to medical card patients, must conclude that such service remains part of the contracted service and has not, in fact, been revised.

(iv) Further, even where a GMS General Practitioner has not or had not previously provided a scheduled evening, weekend or bank holiday service the adoption by him or her of such service is not to be regarded as an Out-of- Hours Arrangements within the February Agreement since such non-routine consultations which necessarily take place at such services are not of the exceptional and unforeseen type envisaged under the Agreement.

3. If you require any further clarification on the above please contact Peter Lennon, GMS Division, Department of Health & Children.