



Locum doctor costs in NHS Trusts in England

Results of a study from the Royal College of Surgeons of England

November 2010

Introduction

Around 60 percent of the National Health Service (NHS) budget is spent on staff, costing approximately £60 billion per annum. Of this around £6.2 billion is spent on medical staff (doctors) in hospitals. Using a Freedom of Information request to 164 acute NHS Trusts in England the Royal College of Surgeons sought to obtain information on total costs for employment of locum doctors (doctors who temporarily fulfil the duties of another) during the last three financial years.

In June 2010 Audit Scotland published their analysis of the use of locum doctors in Scotland. They reported that NHS boards in Scotland spent approximately £47 million on locum doctors in 2008/09 which equates to 4.3 per cent of overall medical staffing expenditure. This was approximately double the amount spent in 1996/97 in real terms.

The last estimate of locum doctor costs in the NHS in England and Wales was made in a 1999 report from the Audit Commission which reported that 'on a typical day 3,500 locums are employed in hospitals in England and Wales, at a cost of £214 million in 1996/97'.

Methodology

The Royal College of Surgeons of England produced the following data by sending a Freedom of Information request to the 164 acute NHS Trusts in England. Trusts were asked for details of their spending on locum doctors over the past three years, broken down into various categories including doctor grade, surgical costs, internal locum costs and external agency costs. Requests were submitted on 9 July 2010 and information received up to the end of August 2010 was included in the analysis. The full text of the request can be seen in the Annex A.

Of the 164 trusts, 118 responded to the request. Those Trusts that were unable to provide a complete or accurate set of data for all three years in a particular category were eliminated from that category before any data analysis took place. For instance, in the category totalling all spending on locums over the past 3 years, 96 of

the 118 Trusts were able to supply full and accurate data for those years. Therefore the subsequent analysis was based on those 96 Trusts' data.

Once this had been applied to each category, a total spend for each year was produced, from which a mean average of individual Trust spending was calculated. This mean average was then used to calculate the total spend of all 164 Trusts in any particular category for each year. For instance, in the category totalling all spending on locums, the total of the 96 Trusts' data was calculated per year, divided by 96 to create an average Trust spend per year, and then multiplied by 164 to produce the predicted total spend of all 164 Trusts in each of the 3 years.

Key findings

1. Total estimated spending on all locum doctors and locum doctors covering surgical positions over the last three financial years.

	2007/8 (£)	2008/9 (£)	2009/10 (£)
All locum doctors	384,367,109	548,663,681	758,363,084
Locum doctors covering surgical positions	119,015,980	172,756,748	232,025,351

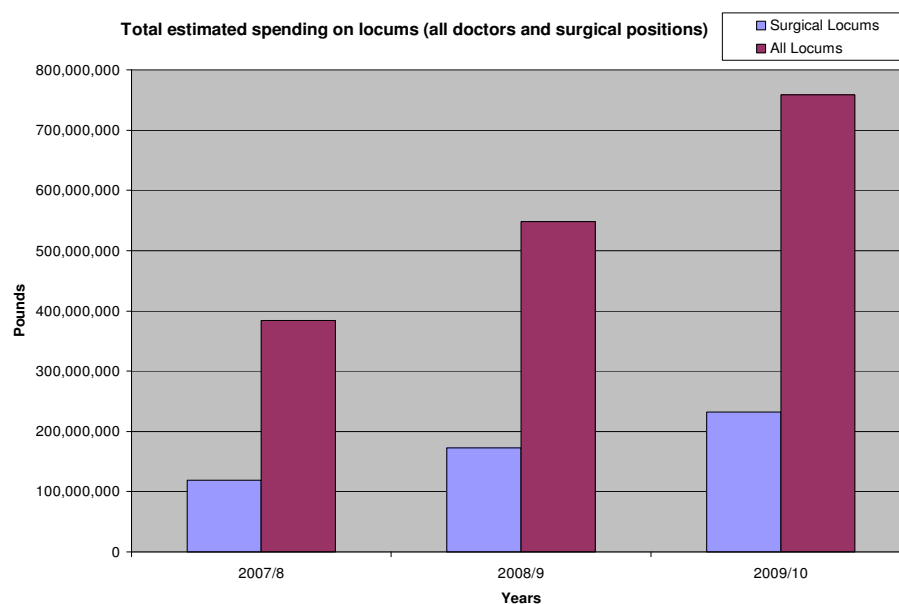


Table 1 and Figure 1: Total estimated spends in England on all locum doctors and locum doctors covering surgical positions over the last three financial years (based on 96 respondents).

2. Total estimated spending on locum doctors either as an internal locum (staff already employed by the trusts taking extra shifts) or through external agency appointments over the last three financial years.

	2007/8 (£)	2008/9 (£)	2009/10 (£)
Internal locums	206,165,975	273,399,522	310,875,152
External agencies	173,758,168	280,101,157	467,284,294

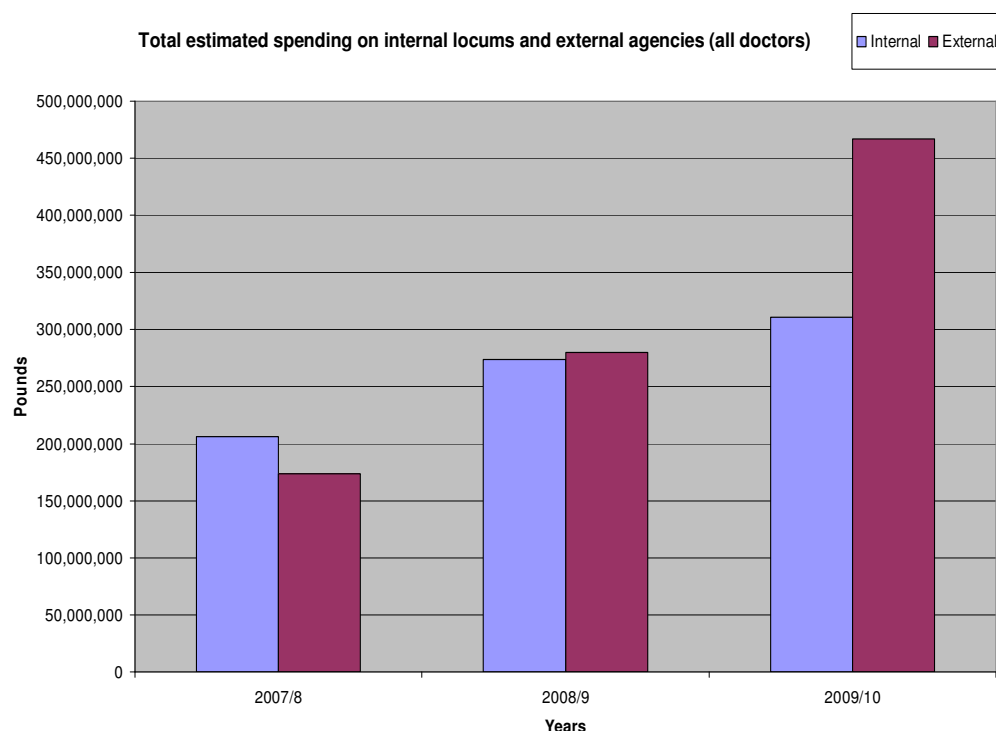


Table 2 and Figure 2: Total estimated spends in England on all locum doctors provided as either an internal locum or through an external agency over the last three financial years.

3. Total estimated spends in England on all locum doctors and locum doctors covering surgical positions broken down by grade of doctor over the last three financial years.

	2007/8 (£)	2008/9 (£)	2009/10 (£)
Consultant	187,665,774	256,331,408	308,630,407
Specialist registrar	59,263,803	86,602,590	126,062,233
CT/FY trainee	65,105,295	89,480,979	137,191,947
Specialty doctor	44,451,859	61,140,463	91,018,375

Table 3a: Total estimated spends in England on all locum doctors broken down by grade of doctor over the last three financial years.

	2007/8 (£)	2008/9 (£)	2009/10 (£)
Consultant	61,538,552	74,105,647	92,684,834
Specialist registrar	19,170,245	26,914,661	29,191,789
CT/FY trainee	n/a	n/a	n/a
Specialty doctor	21,729,892	29,256,010	46,952,723

Table 3b: Total estimated spends in England on locum doctors covering surgical positions broken down by grade of doctor over the last three financial years.

4. Total estimated spends in England on all locum doctors and locum doctors covering surgical positions broken down by the Strategic Health Authority region in which the acute Trust is based over the last three financial years.

	2007/8 (£)	2008/9 (£)	2009/10 (£)
	All locums	All locums	All locums
East England	38,042,279	60,558,889	82,731,556
East Midlands	23,300,314	35,362,832	48,877,380
London	87,052,686	126,488,682	187,442,589
North East	11,282,796	10,858,924	15,937,684
North West	71,750,909	89,950,893	130,150,486
South Central	22,209,064	28,787,603	34,070,119
South East	27,161,778	44,642,597	53,254,820
South West	29,490,685	42,267,260	52,844,061
West Midlands	45,264,070	61,859,200	92,288,264
Yorks & Humb	36,000,328	54,443,583	79,144,415

Table 4a: Total estimated spends for each Strategic Health Authority in England on locum doctors on all locum doctors over the last three financial years.

	2007/8 (£)	2008/9 (£)	2009/10 (£)
	Surgical locums	Surgical locums	Surgical locums
East of England	9,181,691	17,501,109	23,959,054
East Midlands	8,705,360	13,100,822	16,112,490
London	19,596,375	34,007,667	53,172,366
North East	284,276	672,292	2,121,680
North West	22,664,233	26,894,225	39,571,729
South Central	15,095,616	18,873,456	20,990,548
South East	11,026,539	17,005,484	17,962,947
South West	6,289,821	9,777,115	12,697,775
West Midlands	16,719,371	22,009,507	30,530,292
Yorks & Humb	10,054,324	15,117,509	22,329,005

Table 4b: Total estimated spends for each Strategic Health Authority in England on locum doctors covering surgical positions over the last three financial years.

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Annex A: Freedom of Information Request

The Royal College of Surgeons of England would like to make a Freedom of Information Request to your Trust. Please provide answers to the following questions:

1. What was the total cost your Trust paid (in the each of the last three financial years for which data is available) for:
 - a) all locum doctors?
 - b) locum doctors covering surgical positions (see definition below)?

2. Please indicate, for each of the last three financial years for which data is available, the following:
 - a) costs of providing locum doctors in each category below?
 - b) costs of providing locum doctors covering surgical positions in each category below?
 - * Consultant
 - * Non-training grades (excluding consultants)
 - * Trainee (Specialist registrar)
 - * Trainee (Core trainee)
 - * Trainee (Foundation year)
 - * Other

3. Of the total costs paid to locum doctors, in each of the last three financial years for which data is available, what proportion was paid to:
 - a) internal locums
 - b) external agencies
 - c) other (please state)

Definition: surgical positions are doctors working in any of the nine surgical specialties: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Oral and maxillofacial surgery, Otolaryngology, Paediatric surgery, Plastic or reconstructive surgery, Trauma and orthopaedic surgery, Urology.