Scottish Government: Consultation with Stakeholders on removing Scottish Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards from the remit of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life

The Scottish Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards (SACDA) currently operates under the remit of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 framework. BDA Scotland was asked to provide comment on the proposal by Scottish Government to remove SACDA from the remit.

Comments from BDA Scotland are provided below:

**Diminishing Role of SACDA**
BDA Scotland acknowledges that whilst the role of SACDA is diminishing due to fewer national award holders it is important that the process remains independent of government.

**Centralising the Process**
BDA Scotland believes that a committee like SACDA should be commissioned independently from Scottish Government, and by removing SACDA from the remit of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life this independent safeguarding role will be lost. An example of this is the Doctors’ and Dentists’ Review Body (DDRB) set up as an independent body, is currently criticised for following Scottish Government’s policy on pay increases, ignoring all evidence presented to them.

BDA Scotland hopes this proposal is not a further budgetary control mechanism.

**Contract in England and Wales**
One of the differences between the contracts North and South of the border is Distinction Awards. In light of the ongoing discussions on a new consultants’ contract in England and Wales which is expected to be completed in late 2019 at earliest, there is concern within the profession of the potential for a new Scottish Consultants Contract to be negotiated. However, if the contract in England and Wales is significantly better, then it may be difficult to attract people from England to come to work in Scotland, therefore Distinction Awards would be even more necessary.

**Freeze on Distinction Awards**
It is the policy of BDA Scotland’s Scottish Committee for Hospital Dental Services (SCHDS) that it does not agree with the current freeze on the allocation of new distinction awards, and believes that this is likely to be a contributory factor in failing to fill key posts within NHS dental services in Scotland. Consultant staff in NHS England have retained clinical excellence awards (Distinction Awards). As mentioned above England and Wales is currently negotiating a new consultant contract and the future of Distinction Awards is unclear.
If it was agreed to leave SACDA, it would be essential to support the policy of re-establishing Distinction Awards, or at least some kind of award for excellence.

BDA Scotland
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