

Pulse

## GP charity sees 50% rise in requests for financial support during pandemic

8 July 2020 **By Costanza Pearce**

Exclusive GP charity the Cameron Fund has seen requests for financial support rise by more than 50% in 2020 compared with last year, Pulse has learned.

But the charity told Pulse that it may face difficulties itself after a drop in income due to the pandemic.

Enquiries from GPs and GP trainees facing financial hardship increased by 56% from 32 between January and June 2019 to 50 in the same period this year, it said.

Of these, 67% had been affected by Covid-19, including [locum GPs unable to find work or having sessions cancelled](http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/locum-gps-forced-to-claim-benefits-as-work-dries-up/20040849.article). (URL=<http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/locum-gps-forced-to-claim-benefits-as-work-dries-up/20040849.article>)

However, those facing hardship are 'a mix' which also includes salaried GPs, GP trainees and former GPs, the charity said.

Chair of the Cameron Fund and Kent GP Dr Gary Calver told Pulse that GPs with portfolio careers are those who have been most hit.

He said: 'The people that we're looking at are on either zero hours contracts or they're partly salaried and then do locums to top it up. It's particularly the locum and ad hoc work that's dried up.'

And both trainees and GPs who have been out of the workplace for some time due to ill health have had placements and training programmes cancelled or postponed, he added.

In addition, Dr Calver added that 'a number of GPs' who are going through disciplinary procedures, GMC hearings or legal proceedings are struggling as their procedures or appeals are delayed due to the virus.

He said: 'They often have some kind of restrictions put on their practice, which makes it difficult to find work at the best of times. But this makes it even more difficult and there are those who are suspended and feel they have a good case to have that suspension lifted - but that's been put off as well.'

One GP had his disability state benefit payments decreased 'quite substantially' prior to the pandemic and has needed additional support from the fund while his appeal is delayed due to coronavirus, Dr Calver added.

Others have been affected by illness with Covid-19 or the need to shield, as well as family bereavement, he said.

Meanwhile, Dr Calver told Pulse that the charity itself faces uncertainty for the future and he is concerned that next year it 'may have some difficulties'.

He said: 'I suspect that we'll have a decrease in donations. Half our income comes from donations, particularly from LMCs and from individual GPs, and the other half comes from a long-standing investment fund.'

Although the fund received a grant from BMA Giving, its fundraising activities have been curtailed by the pandemic - including an annual collection at the LMCs conference which usually raises around £5,000 and a planned series of events around its 50th anniversary this year.

And income from the fund will also be reduced, Dr Calver said. Investors have told the charity that while they 'anticipate' maintaining the income from the fund this year, next year it 'won't be possible' as stock markets have 'universally' been hit.

Last year, the Cameron Fund awarded grants, loans and money advice totalling over £250,000 to 210 beneficiaries - a 28% increase on 2018 - after receiving applications from 187 GPs either directly or referred by LMCs or other organisations.

It comes Pulse revealed in May that [locum GPs were forced to claim state benefits after struggles to find work during the pandemic.](http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/locum-gps-forced-to-claim-benefits-as-work-dries-up/20040849.article)

([URL=http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/locum-gps-forced-to-claim-benefits-as-work-dries-up/20040849.article](http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/locum-gps-forced-to-claim-benefits-as-work-dries-up/20040849.article))

It also comes as GP practices have been told they are [not able to claim reimbursement for wages under the Government's coronavirus job retention scheme.](http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/gp-practices-completely-excluded-from-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme/20040928.article)

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