



News from the Chair – Spring 2022



The world continues to be influenced by Covid. The applicants and current beneficiaries of the Fund are no different. Recent Trustee meetings have been held by video conferencing, which after the experiences of the last two years worked well. New cases were assessed, and ongoing cases reviewed. We were able to award grants and loans to assist and support our colleagues.

Supporting GPs during these tough times

We continue to see colleagues affected by Covid. Long Covid, especially after hospital admission, can have a devastating effect on life and income particularly if other life circumstances mean that others are dependent on that GP. Dependents include children, partners with their own problems and those widowed. Covid has also influenced those returning to General Practice with 'Return to Practice' places difficult to find. Those who have been through a regulatory process and still have conditions on their practice similarly find it increasingly difficult to identify GPs who have the capacity to act as supervisors.

The Trustees as a collective have vast experience of NHS General practice and its various bodies. Advice and signposting, as well as considering the most effective means of support, are key parts of the Trustees' discussions.

Last year the Cameron Fund supported a higher proportion of working age GPs and GP Trainees. We are increasingly seeing single parent families struggling to fund childcare while they are working, especially in the training years.

Messages of thanks

I feel a great privilege to be a Cameron Fund Trustee and putting donated Funds to their best use. The following quotations recently received shows the value to our colleagues:

*"Thank you for your help and really knowing you're there gives me comfort like I have a family."
"Again, please pass on our gratitude for all your help."*

The Fund also sends a small financial gift at Christmas to current beneficiaries who have little leeway to celebrate. The value of these gifts is illustrated by this case study and email:

Case Study

Dr S was a locum GP under GMC investigation. The investigation was delayed due to the Covid pandemic and eventually resulted in conditions requiring Dr S to be supervised. Dr S was able to return to work but had difficulty finding a suitable supervised post. His wife's earnings were not enough to support the family. The Cameron Fund supported them until Dr S found a suitable post. He wrote:

"Once again, thank you very much for your help and support without which this journey would not have been possible."

I wanted to e-mail to say a huge thank you for the card and very kind gesture from the Cameron trust this Christmas. It is these acts of kindness which make the most impact and I just wanted to let you know how much this meant to our family on Christmas day, it was the most thankful and meaningful gift we received."

Working together to support GPs

I had the privilege recently of making a presentation to NHS Practitioner Health to explain and clarify our role and that of the other medical charities. Financial difficulties are, not surprisingly, a cause and a consequence of many mental health conditions. My predecessors were involved with Practitioner Health in the early days and I was pleased that the Fund was able to reconnect with PH.

We now have the figures for 2021

We are just finalising our accounts for 2021. You can read more about our work last year in our Annual Review. Initial figures show that income was slightly lower than in 2020. Income from our investment fund was down and, unfortunately, this trend is set to continue this year. We were very grateful to receive grant funding from BMA Giving and BMA Charities in 2021. We would also like to thank individual members, LMCs, GPDF and NI GPDF for their valuable contributions. Fundraising is a constant issue that occupies the Fund and we are very thankful for this support. We are mindful that not every LMC supports the Fund and we have recently contacted those who have not supported us for a while to understand the reasons behind their decision. I understand that the LMC Conference is planned to be face-to-face this year and we plan to attend as we have in the past. I look forward to seeing LMC delegates once more.

Our Strategy & Membership drive

The Cameron Fund Trustees recently agreed a new strategy for 2022 to 2025 to guide our work in helping GPs and their families. The main headlines of the strategy are Membership, LMCs, 4 Nations, Policy Issues, Awareness Raising, Raising Funds.

A priority for 2022 is membership. As a membership body, we need to develop and maintain a healthy membership base to ensure sustainability of the Cameron Fund. Your support as members is vital as you help to spread the word about our work so that we can reach those in need. You also ensure the Fund is robust and well governed, by standing for and voting in trustee elections and voting at the AGM. Membership is free of charge but most members choose to make a regular donation to help support GP colleagues.

This year, we want to keep you more up-to-date with our work and will be increasing our newsletter to four times a year. We are also aiming to increase our membership. Our first step is to promote the Fund through other organisations in the GP profession. We would also like to ask for your help by telling your GP colleagues about the Fund and encouraging them to become Members. Over recent years, our membership base has been declining. Sadly, when we send out these newsletters and AGM notices, a proportion are returned. If you are due to move, please let us know your new address so we can keep in touch with you. Better still, provide your email address so we can email you information and keep costs down.

Remembering a much-valued colleague

Sadly, Dr Donald Richardson, former Trustee and Treasurer of The Cameron Fund, passed away at the age of 88 on 20 December. He was a devoted servant to the Fund for over 25 years and held a number of key roles during his working life: Herts LMC Chair (1969-1975), Director of the Secretariate for both Beds & Herts LMCs (1993-99) and received a RCGP Fellowship in 1984. Donald cared deeply about supporting GPs. Throughout his life he was committed to encouraging and advising young GPs at the start of their careers. He also helped to look after the interests of GPs and patients in his LMC role, as well as through his work with the Cameron Fund until he stepped down in 2015.

Keeping things running

I cannot finish without paying tribute to Jill Rowlinson, Mary Barton and Clare Young who are the staff who run the Cameron Fund Office and have kept the Fund fully functional over the past two years.

We appreciate any support you can give us during the coming year. Thank you.
Dr Gary Calver