

REMOTE AND RURAL GENERAL PRACTICE SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUP



Scottish Government
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Since our last bulletin, the team have been very busy taking part in a range of practice visits and engagement events across remote and rural Scotland (see more details below).

Remote and Rural General Practice Working Group Meetings

The Rural Working Group met for the fourth time on Thursday 7th March 2019 at the Scottish Health Service Centre in Edinburgh. The Group's discussions were around the workforce required to deliver primary care redesign in rural areas, sharing good practice, how to utilise the rural fund.

Case Studies

Currently, the Rural Group has carried out a wide programme of engagement with rural GPs across Scotland in order to gather Case Studies to share good practice and innovative solutions to implement the new contract in rural communities. These Case Studies are due to be published online to demonstrate effective implementation of the new contract in the face of rural challenges. In the meantime if you are interested in sharing your good practice, please get in touch with us via PCRural@gov.scot.

We will be preparing for the next meeting on Tuesday 4th June 2019, which will take place in a workshop style to work on tangible solutions, and move towards a recommending phase.

Primary Care Improvement Plan Guidance

The 2018 General Medical Services Contract Offer (the Contract) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) both recognise the distinctive position of remote and rural practices, and the need for flexibility in delivering primary care redesign. They state, for example:

“In rare circumstances it may be appropriate for GP practices, such as small remote and rural practices, to agree to continue delivering services through locally agreed contract options”.

“Plans must determine the priorities based on population healthcare needs, taking into account existing service delivery, available workforce and available resources”.

That is why, on 14th March 2019 we issued guidance to Integration Authorities (IAs) around our expectations for their revised Primary Care Improvement Plans due in April 2019, including encouraging them to explore flexibility, supported by strong evidence to

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deliver redesign in rural areas. This guidance should help to address concerns raised by RGPAS members in a recent survey around the potential fragmentation of care.

Further information on the working group is available on our webpage:

<https://www.gov.scot/groups/remote-and-rural-general-practice-working-group/>

Scottish Rural Medical Collaborative (SRMC)

The Scottish Rural Medicine Collaborative (SRMC) is a programme funded by the Scottish Government's GP Recruitment and Retention Fund. The programme is about developing ways to improve the recruitment and retention of GPs working in a rural setting across ten Health Board areas in Scotland. SRMC have delivered the following to date:

- BASiCs training
- Launch of GPJobs [website](#)
- Recruitment activity including attendance & workshops at a range of events (RCGP conference / BMJ careers fair / First5s conference / career event in Amsterdam etc.)
- Launch of "Rediscover the joy" project.
- Development of the Good practice guide, a new project aimed at retention "reflect and rejuvenate".

SRMC is now looking ahead to develop its work programme for the next few years, and the Rural Group will work with SRMC to ensure a joined-up approach in delivering these objectives. Find more information [here](#).

Rediscover the Joy of General Practice

A collaboration of four rural Health Boards: Shetland, Orkney, Western Isles and Highland, to develop a scheme to attract experienced GPs to work in rural practices on a flexible basis for a maximum number of weeks a year. GPs employed on the scheme will be provided with BASiCs training and mentorship. Following advertising, 51 applicants applied, and so far 15 candidates have been appointed. Recruitment is still ongoing, feel free to email shet-hb.hrhub@nhs.net for more information.

Dispensing Working Group

The Dispensing Working Group met for the second time on 5th February 2019. £501,889 funding from the rural fund has been allocated to support dispensing practices through three initiatives, training for dispensing staff, implementation of the NSAIDs quality improvement project and funding to support the implementation of the Falsified Medicines Directive. More information on this funding can be found [here](#).

At the meeting, the group agreed its terms of reference. The group discussed the Falsified Medicines Directive, a key issue for dispensing practices. RGPAS raised the concern that

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practices needed more guidance from the Scottish Government. You can access this guidance [here](#). The group is preparing for the next meeting on 21st May 2019. Further information on the working group is available on its [website](#).



Scotland Policy Conference: The future of primary care in Scotland

On 31st January, Sir Lewis Ritchie was invited to give a talk titled, '*The General Medical Services (GMS) Contract in rural Scotland: funding, tackling resource needs and addressing recruitment and retention issues*'. He spoke about challenges specific to remote and rural general practices such as long hours, professional isolation and diverse workload.

During the presentation, he reasoned that all of these need to be tackled going forward, and the new and evolving GP Contract must address these issues. He advised that future services should be desirable, sustainable (and 'rural proofed'), equitable and affordable.

Later, Fiona Duff joined the panel discussion titled '*Addressing challenges for the primary care workforce: training, recruitment and developing effective career pathways*'.



Rural Engagement

Dumfries & Galloway

On 4th and 5th February, members of the Scottish Government Primary Care team visited a number of practices in Dumfries and Galloway and discussed issues such as practice sustainability, GP recruitment and retention and delivery of the wider MDT in rural areas.



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Western Isles (WI)

In February, members of the SG Primary Care team visited following GP Practices and community hospitals across the Western Isles over a three day visit:

- Benbeculla Medical Practice
- Uist and Barra Hospital
- Community Clinic, Balivanich
- North Uist Medical Practice
- North Harris Medical Practice in Tarbert
- Broadbay and The Group Medical Practices in Stornoway, along with Langabhat Medical Practice in Leurbost.



They also met with Ron Culley, Chief Officer and Dr Kirsty Brightwell, Associate Medical Director, Stephan Smit, Primary Care Manager along with other members of the HSCP management team to discuss WI's approach to implementing the contract/ MOU. The group was interested to hear that WI are prioritizing the implementation of Vaccinations and Community Treatment Room Services.

GPs across Western Isles raised concerns around poor recruitment rates, sustainability and limited availability of MDTs in rural areas.

Some practices have taken advantage of remote working e.g. a Pharmacist in Barra supporting a practice in Stornoway. One practice reported that Health Board has now taken over its lease and that eased financial burden on GP Partners.

Thank you to everybody we have visited for your warm welcome and hospitality.

Do you want to get involved with the Rural SLWG? Do you have a view or a comment you want the group to be aware of? Is there a great initiative in your area that would be an excellent case study? Would you like Sir Lewis or other members of the team to visit your practice? Please contact us on PCRural@gov.scot.

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