‘General practice has never been more crucial to Scotland’s communities. If we are to preserve the service for the future, significant action is required sooner rather than later.’

Miles Mack, Chair of RCGP Scottish Council

General practice is the cornerstone of a sustainable health service. Primary care conducts around 90% of patient contacts in the NHS, but general practice currently receives only 7.2% of the Scottish NHS budget. Following pressure from RCGP Scotland and the BMA, Scottish Government is to be congratulated for its pledge to increase funding because, if general practice fails, the whole NHS fails. Without significant further action, the future of general practice services will remain under threat throughout the country. We must protect the heart of general practice and its role for patients, as laid out in RCGP Scotland’s Core Values report. Action is needed, both at Holyrood and at Westminster, to protect those core values and the health of the Scottish people.
The 2017 General Election is an opportunity to take action. RCGP Scotland believes that, to rescue and deliver a sustainable future for general practice, governments must:

Deliver the £500m for GP practices and health centres promised by the First Minister, so that general practice receives 11% of the NHS Scotland budget on an annual basis from 2021. This is in line with RCGP Scotland’s Put patients first campaign and the 2015 Scottish LMC Conference. The supply of a first £250 million portion has been outlined. Government needs to provide detail on how the second £250 million will be delivered.

Appropriately increase funding to GPs in areas of high socio-economic deprivation and health inequalities across Scotland. These funds cannot be moved from struggling practices throughout the rest of the country, whether they be in remote and rural or in urban settings. More funding must be delivered to the system overall.

There is a projected deficit of 828 whole-time equivalent GPs in Scotland, by 2021. **Government must facilitate the delivery of sufficient numbers of GPs** to overcome it. The National GPs Performers List should be implemented as soon as possible and bureaucracy reduced to allow free movement of GPs throughout the four nations.

Safeguard the GP workforce during international negotiations by guaranteeing the status of healthcare professionals already working in Scotland and the UK. Make it as easy as possible for doctors from the EU and other countries to move to the UK. Place GPs on the Shortage Occupation List.

Implement existing pledges to expand the wider general practice team by 2021. Keep members of the wider general practice team part of general practice structures to best safeguard patient safety and quality of care, and clarify that only GPs can be allowed to perform the role of GPs.

Adopt the definition and 21 principles of primary care established in *The future of primary care in Scotland: a view from the professions*.

Recognise that general practices are a ‘key setting’ in the *Mental Health Strategy: 2017-2027* and ensure that mental health services in direct support of GPs have appropriate funding to adequately serve patients.

In line with the principles of *Realistic Medicine*, engage in a wider public discussion about the appropriate and sustainable use of general practice services, rightly available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Specifically invest in improvements across the interfaces of care, which are known to be areas of high risk for both patients and the clinicians providing their care.

Improve the IT systems that GPs rely on to provide safe, effective and high quality care, especially for patients with complex health and social care needs.

‘GPs must be the future of our health services. No one else knows a patient’s physical, psychological and social makeup so well.’

*Colin Angus, Chair, Patient Partnership in Practice*