3 Seher Ahmad
Chair, AiT Committee

4 Hussain Ahmad
North West

5 Anjella Balendra
London

6 Sophie Crampin
Severn

7 Ahmed Rashid
East England

8 Becky Hancock
Wessex

9 Shabana Alam-Zahir
West Midlands

10 Manesh Singh Gill
Southeast Scotland

11 Amy Knighton
East of Scotland

12 Heather Ryan
Mersey

13 Steven Kinnear and Alexander Murray
Northern Ireland

14 Joe Klakus
Yorkshire

15 Jodie Blackadder-Coward and Ryan Thomas
Defence Deanery

16 Dr Krishna Kasaraneni (Chair)
and Dr Sangeetha Sornalingam (Deputy Chair)
BMA GP Trainees’ Sub-committee
The AiT Committee has taken an active role in key discussions within training and in the development of RCGP policy. We’ve made an impact in the College and beyond with a proactive trainee voice in government initiatives and working collaboratively with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges amongst many other achievements.

Three key ways the Committee has positively impacted the future of GP training

This year we’ve seen a number of changes to the MRCGP examination. Trainees wanted to see the time allowed for the Applied Knowledge Test lengthened and I’m delighted to say this has been implemented with a number of other enhancements. A judicial review of the Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) this year concluded that the examination was a fair method of assessment and ruled out it being the cause of differential pass rates. Despite this, we have worked tirelessly with the College to implement changes to the CSA to support all trainees taking the exam. This has been in the form of improved exam feedback, web resources for struggling trainees and continuing to work with deaneries to raise training standards. There is still much to be done and we will prioritise working with our Chief Examiner, Pauline Foreman and her team to push for meaningful outcomes for trainees.

Secondly, we’ve listened to your feedback about how you can be best supported as new starters and have produced a Starters’ Guide for new GP trainees; a concise booklet encompassing all of the information we wish we had known when we were ST1s. It is packed with hints and tips on how to get ahead with training, exams and how to pass the Annual Review of Competence Progression successfully. It is produced by trainees for trainees and will go some way in ensuring AiTs are empowered to gain the most from their training programmes.

Thirdly, I’ve recognised the concern amongst the GP community about the future sustainability of our profession. We are all aware of the alarming reduction of successful candidates into GP training schemes this year with many empty posts remaining. In order to ensure there are enough GPs working with us in the next generation, the AiT Committee has worked determinedly to ensure general practice remains the first choice career for junior doctors and medical students. This year, we’ve pioneered a network of GP societies across every medical school in the UK. We’ve ensured they are well linked with each other and with the AiT Committee so we can provide much needed resources and share good practice. This year has also seen the completion of the ‘Celebrating GP Careers’ project which has produced a series of podcasts and videos about life as a GP. I’m sure this will help in demystifying and demythifying general practice for those considering a career in our profession.

Succession and support

This year I have been supported immensely by my Deputy Chair, Dr Simon Glew, who has worked conscientiously for the AiT cause alongside his many other commitments. He has led on producing a brilliant AiT programme for this year’s RCGP Annual Conference in Liverpool and provided a strong voice for trainees in College council and beyond. I’m also thankful for the support from our College Chair, Dr Maureen Baker and our senior officers, particularly Professor Amanda Howe who has always championed AiT initiatives. Finally, I am pleased to be handing over to our new Chair-elect, Dr Toby Holland. Toby is an academic GPST4 and has been a fantastically active member of our committee as the Defence deanery representative this year. I look forward to seeing the committee thrive under his leadership this coming year!

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It has been a pleasure serving as Chair of the AiT Committee this year. Although it’s been one of my most challenging years, it’s one that I have thoroughly enjoyed.

Seher Ahmad
Chair, AiT Committee
Collaboration is key for supporting and representing GP trainees.

Another busy year has flown by and the AiT Committee continues to strengthen and grow. Whether it be through quarterly meetings, online dialogue or video conferencing, the committee is hard at work doing the best it can for its trainees.

Representing the North West faculty has been a privilege. It has been a steep learning curve and, from taking an initial position of learning as the job went on, I am now fully equipped to help achieve more in my second year.

When the new AiT Committee was elected, we decided that our legacy would be the development of an AiT Starters’ Guide. Certainly, from a personal point of view, there was such an information overload at the start of my training it was impossible to take it all in. I know how much better many of us would have felt if only we knew this and that when we started GPST1. We will soon be launching this guide to all trainees so watch this space!

Another project of ours was to support the College’s aim to promote general practice as a career. We have started to liaise with medical students and our aim is to have a direct link between universities and faculties. Momentum is building and I hope by the end of my tenure we will have something more concrete in the pipeline.

Locally, a lot of hard work remains. It is my aim that we relaunch the North West Junior Doctors Forum for GP trainees which has previously lied dormant - as one unit we will have a much more powerful voice and ultimately achieve more. I am also keen to engage more trainees locally and work more collaboratively in the region. It is both a challenge and an opportunity that I look forward to and hope to achieve next year.

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Taking part in the debate about the future of GP training

As an advocate for shaping education and training for the future, I have been heavily involved with various committees at local, regional and national levels. Having been warmly welcomed to the AIT Committee, it has been great to participate in the topical discussions and debates that have been raised both in face-to-face meetings and via online forums.

In line with the committee’s project to promote GP careers, I was invited to speak at the London Academic Foundation Programme Forum in November 2013 at Stewart House in Russell Square to promote general practice and academic general practice as a career. I also participated in an Academic Medical Careers Evening at St George’s University of London in March which was aimed at providing insight to medical students.

I have sat on the London School of General Practice Trainee Committee (LSGPTC). This group is composed of trainee representatives from all London VTS schemes and meets regularly to discuss any issues affecting trainees, ensuring that training standards are maintained and regulated across the board. I was also on the committee organising our annual London GP Trainees Conference in July 2014, an event that proved to be a huge success.

Additionally, I was privileged to have a lead role on the sub-committee which launched the first Trainee Excellence Awards for GP trainees in London, recognising the achievements of fellow trainees above and beyond their training requirements in various categories.

Providing the trainee voice in national steering groups

I have also been part of the BMA Greater London GP Trainees’ Committee, a forum within which all issues relating to GP training in our region can be discussed and forwarded to the BMA’s UK GP Registrars sub-committee for further action where necessary. My involvement at various levels means I have been able to cascade crucial and relevant information to London AiTs in real-time to ensure they are aware of changes to the shape of their future training.

The year ahead promises to be an exciting one. Some of the new ventures I will be involved in will include sitting on the GP National Recruitment Steering Group and discussing current issues in recruitment, training standards and delivery. I am also currently liaising with Trainees’ Committee for Paediatrics to bring about a series of collaborative events known as ‘The learning together’ programme. This programme consists of individual training days and encourages shared learning between specialties.

Representing London AiTs has been an incredibly insightful experience, providing me with a better understanding and awareness of the different committees that exist to support trainees. With the changing face of general practice, I consider it a great honour to be offered such a host of opportunities to contribute to the future of this dynamic specialty and look forward to continuing in this role in the year to come.

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Anjella Balendra
London

I am currently an ACF ST2 in general practice and joined the AIT Committee in 2013/14 as the Deputy AIT representative for London. This year I have taken on the role as the lead London AIT representative. It has been a privilege to represent London AiTs and one of my priorities has been to engage with trainees and ensure they are well informed with up-to-date information throughout their training.
Ensuring the AiT voice is heard
As a member of the RCGP AiT Committee I have thoroughly enjoyed contributing to the projects we have been working on this year; writing sections of the AiT Starters’ Guide, engaging with Bristol University to promote GP careers and assisting with the AiT aspects of the RCGP conference. I have much enjoyed contributing to the lively debates at the committee meetings and have learned a huge amount in the process.

Locally I have been the chair of the Junior Doctors Committee in my local area, Swindon. In this role I facilitated meetings between all of the junior doctors in the hospital and then represented their voice to the management board of the hospital. This gave me a key insight into training and working issues across all specialties as well as key issues being faced by GP trainees. I believe it is vital for doctors of all specialties to have a voice within their local hospital and was pleased to be able to represent the junior doctors in this way.

Career buddy initiative provides an exciting opportunity for potential trainees
As part of my role on the local committee I set up a career buddy system. This involved creating a database of all doctors from different specialties who were willing to be buddied up with foundation trainees. The trainees are provided with an insight into different specialties, gain an idea about what it is like to work in particular areas as well as advice for applications and potential taster days. This benefitted potential GP applicants because many trainees do not get access to GP jobs at foundation level and therefore don’t discover what life as a GP is like and the challenges and rewards of the job. By pairing up F1 and F2 doctors with enthusiastic GP trainees, more trainees were encouraged to apply for GP training and the feedback from this was very positive. This is something I am keen to roll out to the other hospitals in our deanery and potentially at a national level in order to promote GP as a career which is becoming an increasingly important issue.

I have been closely involved with the local faculty, attending board meetings and their AGM. Severn provides fantastic trainee courses on the Applied Knowledge Test and Clinical Skills Assessment as well as bursaries and fellowships, lectures and dinners and trainee excellence awards. I am impressed with the faculty’s proactive nature and proud to be part of it.

I am thrilled that the membership of the RCGP AiT Committee is for two years and look forward to using what I have learned and experienced this year to drive forward changes over the next 12 months. I look forward to a life away from shift work which will free me up to work more closely with the other patches in the deanery and with the faculty board to further improve training in Severn.

Sophie Crampin
Severn
I am currently a GPST1 trainee and was fortunate enough to be able to represent the Severn deanery on the AiT Committee. This has been a real honour for me because I am passionate about improving training for AiTs locally and nationally as well as being a voice for GP trainees in the deanery.

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Working with others to promote and improve GP training

For some time, I’ve wanted to get involved with the College and help to promote and enhance general practice as a discipline and particularly, general practice training. I was therefore delighted and honoured to be elected to the AiT Committee and to represent the East England trainees at the College. It has been a pleasure to work with a very talented group of trainees, led wonderfully by the ‘dream team’ of Seher and Simon.

Within East England, I’ve worked with representatives from other specialties and attended meetings on how we can improve postgraduate specialty training within the region. We have been working on many generic issues, such as optimising the Annual Review of Competence Progression which has been improved this year after a reorganisation.

It was a privilege to be asked to speak at the College visit for new trainees and lovely to meet lots of ST1s who were hopefully motivated by the wonderful building and the inspirational words of Professor Pringle.

After some stimulating discussions with the Postgraduate GP Dean, I attended a meeting of Associate Deans to discuss ways in which trainees can openly share their views about the training experience. This brainstorming session was most productive and we are currently working on developing some of the ideas and trialling them in the next year. It was refreshing to see the extent to which attempts are being made to hear the trainee voice and build links across schemes in this geographically large deanery.

National initiatives to improve the AiT experience

At a national level, there has been a lot going on. We have received regular updates about two areas that have caused much angst amongst trainees. Firstly, Dr Helen Stokes-Lampard, College Honorary Treasurer has been working hard to help clarify the tax claims for RCGP examinations and you will have seen the information disseminated about her progress. Secondly, the controversy surrounding the Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) and its judicial review was discussed in great detail and the Chief Examiner, Dr Sue Rendell, consulted the AiT Committee extensively. The hard work continues to improve the CSA process, notably by the increased number of diets being offered from next year.

The exciting committee projects being carried out include an AiT Starters’ Guide for new trainees and a GP career project that will improve College engagement with medical schools. Both are underway and I’m sure will make a great impact for years to come. I hope that you have had a chance to see the InnovAiT article (August 2014) that I wrote with our Committee Chair, Seher, about the rationale behind the medical school project.

Although the committee is running for two years, I am taking an Out of Programme Experience (OOPE) next year to work for NICE and will therefore hand over the reins to my deputy, Vino Armugam. I wish her the best of luck and have no doubt she will do a great job for you all.

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Ahmed Rashid
East England

What an incredible year it has been for the AiT Committee and I’m honoured to have been a member. I’ve worked hard to serve the East England trainees who elected me and hope that I’ve done so respectably.
Utilising funding and networks to enhance support for local AiTs

We have a full and representative Wessex AiT sub-committee including patch reps for Mid-Hants, Dorset, Southampton, Portsmouth and Isle of Wight and a Less Than Full-Time Training representative. We maintain strong links with the local BMA committee and the Local Medical Committee (LMC) with representatives from each of these attending our meetings, encouraging close relationships between different committees in the region.

We continue to receive a generous professional development training grant from the Wessex deanery and have used this to provide free subscriptions to online revision resources for trainees preparing for the Applied Knowledge Test and the Clinical Skills Assessment with excellent feedback received. We continue to look at further ways we can use this money to support trainees in Wessex.

This year we launched our first Wessex AiT Newsletter which was sent out with the monthly Wessex RCGP faculty ebulletin and which we hope will be the first of many. This keeps trainees updated about committee activities and any relevant issues affecting trainees. We have also used this to raise awareness of additional and helpful local resources for trainees. This includes the Wessex GP Educational Trust which provides a number of educational events and significant discounts for many courses and the Wessex Faculty Bursary scheme which enables trainees to apply for additional funding for extra educational experiences such as international work.

Our Less Than Full-Time Training representative has written a document entitled ‘A guide to planning your maternity - written by a GP trainee for GP trainees’ which will be available via the Wessex deanery website very soon and which we are sure will be an extremely useful resource. We have also updated the ‘Wessex deanery AiT Guide to completing your GP training’ which is available to all trainees in the deanery via our website.

Bringing trainees together in a variety of ways

Trainees have been encouraged to attend a number of events within Wessex such as a Wessex Faculty RCGP Awards evening and the Wessex RCGP annual lecture. We have also encouraged trainees to liaise with their patch reps about any concerns or problems they are having so that these can then be brought to the Wessex AiT sub-committee meetings and dealt with as appropriate. Over the past year this has led to the resolution of concerns about the quality of teaching on the GP teaching days in some patches.

We are currently liaising with Southampton University Medical School to try and help establish a medical student GP society. This stemmed from an initiative by the national AiT Committee to promote general practice as a career from an early stage to reverse the decline in recruitment to general practice training.

At a national level I have enjoyed contributing to a number of activities including planning for the AiT component of the RCGP Annual Conference, representing AiTs on the Assessment Development Committee and contributing to the new AiT Starters’ Guide. I’m very excited about everything that next year has in store!

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Becky Hancock
Wessex

It has been a privilege to represent Wessex trainees over the past year and I look forward to attending the national RCGP AiT Committee meetings, the Wessex AiT sub-committee meetings, and the Wessex faculty board meetings and I have been involved in many projects both nationally and locally.
Enhancing trainee experiences within the West Midlands

As Vice Chair and now Chair of the West Midlands AiT Committee I have felt privileged to work with a really proactive and dedicated committee. Passionate about improving the journey for AiTs I organised the inaugural Starters’ Conference in October 2013 and its success has resulted in it becoming an annual event that will be bigger and better this year.

The ‘Enhancing trainee choice in shaping their GP Careers’ project gives me a huge sense of achievement and pride. AiTs raised dissatisfaction with the lack of choice in post allocation as they felt unable to direct their learning needs and have input into shaping their GP careers. We ran an online survey and focus groups to canvass the AiT voice regarding allocation and collaborated with the deanery to bring about a positive change in promoting and protecting AiT choice and equity in the process.

With ‘SecondaryCare4PrimaryCare’ we were keen to optimise GP training within specialty posts and we worked with the deanery to develop guides that aim to enhance the AiT experience for both trainees and trainers.

As a committee we submitted bids for a number of opportunities for AiTs including global health bursaries, leadership courses, a GP trainee forum and palliative care simulation. Currently I am leading the global health bid which provides opportunities for trainees to gain international experience.

Representing Birmingham AiTs within the RCGP Midlands faculty has been an incredible opportunity to understand the College and get involved locally and we showed courage and integrity when representing concerns over local processes for the Annual Review of Competence Progression. This will hopefully lead to a stronger AiT voice in future training.

Taking a proactive role at College level

It’s been a privilege to lead and work with the AiT Committee to create the first ever AiT Starters’ Guide which sets out useful tips, from one trainee to another, in a pragmatic and practical way to facilitate a smoother and more successful time in training.

To support the promotion of GP careers I interviewed an inspiring GP who showcased the wide variety of opportunities general practice provides. I have also had the pleasure of working with the RCGP ePortfolio team representing AiTs in the development of the new ePortfolio and an updated ePortfolio guide.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this post has been engaging with trainees regarding national issues such as the DBS process and ensuring AiT interests are protected in national initiatives. Challenging and healthy debates have been really insightful. In particular representing AiTs on the RCGP Patient Participation Group has been a real learning experience especially in the current challenging times for general practice.

The judicial review of the Clinical Skills Assessment (CSA) has been a challenging time and in my various roles I have provided peer support for trainees. I have also worked with the RCGP CSA core team in reviewing changes to improve the CSA experience, for example making the website more appealing and functional, developing materials aimed at those more likely to struggle with the exam and reviewing participant feedback.

The past year has proved to me the power AiTs have with their vision and enthusiasm to bring about positive change in our training and the future of general practice. I am grateful for the opportunity to represent trainees in the West Midlands nationally and excited about the forthcoming year. Here’s to a promising future for AiTs!

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Shabana Alam-Zahir
West Midlands

It has been an honour representing West Midlands AiTs and collaborating with representatives nationally on the RCGP AiT Committee. We have had a really productive year locally and nationally, working to improve the training experience for AiTs. I’m pleased to be able to share some of the highlights from the last 12 months.
Developing the role of an AiT representative to make a tangible difference

Admittedly, this first year has been about gaining a deep understanding of the role and responsibility of an AiT representative and getting to know the intricacies of the politics and polemics associated with the committee. The functions and responsibility of the various boards, committees and working groups and, importantly, their relevance to trainees was probably a good place to start!

I was able to attend a meeting of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges Trainee Doctors Group which was a fruitful, engaging and productive gathering of colleagues from varied specialties. It’s refreshing to know that much common ground exists on issues affecting different specialties and there is a genuine desire to come up with mutually agreeable solutions where there are none.

I have contributed to the AiT Starters’ Guide and feel proud that this committee has seen a project that it conceived come to fruition. On my part I will endeavour to further promote and encourage its use locally.

Perhaps one of the biggest privileges I’ve had is getting to know my local region and to understand the workings of the faculty. I have attended two faculty board meetings and moving forward, I hope to actively engage more with the region’s AiTs. As part of one related initiative, I am looking to facilitate the delivery education sessions in Edinburgh for AiTs, specifically covering topics that are not formally covered by the local GP unit as part of the curriculum.

Finally, regardless of what happens with the Scottish referendum, it is a blatant reality that there are some issues that are more relevant to us north of the border. To that end, I intend to lend my full support and commitment to the fledgling Scottish AiT Committee.

If the first year was about finding my feet and understanding the workings of the committee, the second year is about contributing more actively in representing the trainees of Southeast Scotland and coming up with solutions that benefit both local and national trainees.

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Manesh Singh Gill
Southeast Scotland

This first year as an AiT representative has been one of observing, learning and yes, reflecting. My primary motivation to put myself forward as a trainee representative was to actively engage with other trainees in identifying tangible solutions to issues affecting GP trainees both locally and nationally. I have been greatly encouraged and am full of admiration for the work and commitment of the members of this committee; their enthusiasm has been truly inspiring.
A small deanery with plenty to offer!

Up until this point I had been an AiT representative for my local faculty board and one of the RCGP representatives on the Scottish Academy of Trainee Doctors Group (SATDG), which incorporates trainees from all of the different specialist colleges in Scotland to discuss training needs. Both of these opportunities had given me some useful insight into the training needs of each college and that of the RCGP.

It was with some trepidation that I attended the first AiT meeting in Euston Square in autumn 2013. However, it was great to meet like-minded trainees from all over the country, all trying to make things better and to ensure that the trainee voice is heard - we are the future of the profession and therefore should be part of the decisions made now.

Since then I have helped to set up the Scottish AiT Committee, continued to be a part of my local faculty board and the SATDG and taken an active role in the national AiT Committee. This has involved helping with conference preparation, the ST1 Starters’ Guide and our current biggest project, promoting general practice as a career (which has got me involved in a host of other things!).

East of Scotland is a small deanery with approximately 100 trainees in total. However, we still have plenty to offer to the national committee and to general practice as a whole. I have spent this year dangling my feet in the water and trying to figure out how things are done so that I can build on this for the year ahead.

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Amy Knighton
East of Scotland

I joined the AiT Committee at the beginning of GPST2 and with no previous representative from the East of Scotland I have spent some time trying to figure out what my role is and how things worked. Next year I hope to do more and use the forums at both Scottish and national level to represent my wee deanery in the north.
Participation at a national level

Attending all three RCGP AiT Committee meetings in London this year has provided an invaluable opportunity to network with GP trainees from across the UK and learn how GP training is organised in other areas. During our first committee meeting in November, we agreed on two projects: developing a Starters’ Guide for ST1s and working with medical students and junior doctors to promote general practice as a rewarding career choice. I am pleased to have contributed to both.

I co-authored two articles for the Starters’ Guide and have contacted staff and students at Liverpool Medical School with a view to work together to establish a GP society for undergraduates at the university. While most other medical specialties have an undergraduate society, there is no society for students interested in general practice. However, there are several students interested in forming a GP society so we will meet in the new academic year to develop plans for this.

I was also fortunate enough to interview Professor Kamila Hawthorne, a GP and academic medical educator from Cardiff for the ‘Celebrating GP Careers’ project. Professor Hawthorne has a portfolio career combining clinical practice and research with undergraduate and postgraduate education and I was inspired by how her career has developed. I was particularly interested to learn how she combines her many roles and still maintains a work-life balance.

With the RCGP Annual Conference coming to my home town of Liverpool in October 2014, I have been liaising with the Secretariat regarding the famous AiT pub quiz, so if you don’t like the bar we end up in, you know who to blame!

Developing plans to establish local AiT groups

In my role as AiT representative, I attend the Board of the Mersey Postgraduate School of General Practice which enables me to keep up-to-date with current issues in local GP training and to communicate trainees’ feedback and concerns to senior figures. I have also attended Mersey faculty board meetings when possible.

At present, there is no formal GP trainees’ committee in Mersey. The current system is that the AiT representative holds meetings three times a year to which all trainees in Mersey are invited. However, attendance can be variable and it is difficult to establish long-term projects and goals without the continuity provided by a committee. Several trainees have expressed an interest in forming a committee and I hope to take this forward during the coming year. If you are a Mersey trainee and you are interested, please get in touch!

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Heather Ryan
Mersey

As a GPST1, I had the tremendous privilege of representing Mersey GP trainees at a local and national level and will continue to do so for a second year. In the next 12 months, I hope to establish a GP trainees’ committee in Mersey and develop stronger links with local medical students to encourage undergraduates to consider general practice as a career.
First5® bursaries to support professional development

In May 2013 three Investec First5® travel bursaries were presented at the RCGP NI Annual Excellence in General Practice Awards to Dr Suzanne McQuillan, Dr Neil Herron and Dr Janet McIlfatrick. These bursaries will be used to enhance their knowledge by funding their attendance at educational courses or providing support for research projects. We are looking forward to hearing about the outcomes of their funded learning experiences.

An eclectic mix of training events to meet different needs

This year also saw the continuation of workshops and events specifically aimed at our AiT and First5® members. In November 2013 a workshop on telephone triage and identifying a sick child was held in Belfast for our AiT members, helping to develop their telephone consultation and communication skills.

We also held the annual ‘Life as a Locum’ event to give AiTs a taste of what life is like as a new locum GP which was presented by First5s, experienced GPs and practice managers. Particular thanks goes to the delegate who travelled from England just to be with us for this very popular event!

We have also held several computer classes this year to introduce our members to the software systems they will be using in different surgeries and making sure they have the tools for excellent patient data management.

For our First5s we held a half-day session on childhood feeding, domestic violence and sexual health with our First5® representative Dr Alex Murray acting as Master of Ceremonies.

A big thank you to our First5® members who continue to play an active and valuable role in the Members’ Forum, sharing information and opinions on our events, communications and member services.

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Steven Kinnear and Alexander Murray
Northern Ireland

With our ongoing work to develop our relationship with our AiT and First5® members through growing communication channels and educational events we look forward to the opportunities and challenges which lie ahead!
Helping to facilitate a better way of working together

‘We have two ears and only one mouth’ was the favourite saying of my primary school head teacher to advocate the importance of listening and this has been very much a listening year for me.

I inherited a very large deanery with local hubs of activity that could benefit from being better connected with each other. Slowly but surely I have been trying to draw these connections together concentrating mainly on the East. I feel positive that we have already improved our associations with other training schemes and now have a more unified direction.

It has been gratifying to see how issues generated from local discussion have been brought forward for national debate and allowed to contribute to the wider picture of GP training in the RCGP. The national AiT Committee really does allow the sharing of experiences and attitudes.

As part of my role I have contributed to the Starters’ Guide for GP trainees and am involved in promoting the GP careers scheme in partnership with local universities.

From local debate to national influence and back again

I sit on a RCGP sub-committee for rural general practice which has a lively online discussion group. This committee works hard to address the difficulties GPs in rural areas face with the additional, unique challenges of amenities and geography and they have some really exciting ideas in the pipeline.

My aim for the coming year is to become more involved in the regional aspects of training and try to better represent all those who train in Yorkshire. We are going to try to engage more with our AiT deputies and with those who may represent trainees in an unofficial capacity. By the end of my tenure I hope to be able to pass on a deanery that has named trainee representation across Yorkshire feeding into the College and facilitating an effective flow of information, support and guidance back into the area.

Undoubtedly, these are exciting but challenging times and everybody has the opportunity to make a real difference to the career they have chosen.

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Joe Klakus
Yorkshire

Where did the year go? As always it has flown by but the last 12 months have presented an exciting opportunity for our area to be represented at a national level and at deanery level through collaboration with our peers. It has been a year, which will hopefully act as a strong platform for the coming one.
New quarterly updates and taking the lead to promote GP careers

Our initial aim this year was to improve communication between trainees, the deanery and the College. By having AiT representatives at Highlands and Islands baggage sessions and liaising more closely with the General Practice Education Committee (GPEC) representatives we have been able to collate discussion points and present a united voice on behalf of trainees.

In addition to the formal feedback sessions, informal chats and emails with trainees, as always, have been fruitful when considering themes of concern or praise regarding training. We understand no-one wants their inbox filled with ongoing committee commentaries and so, in collaboration with the GPEC representatives, we are now issuing quarterly updates to keep you up-to-speed with training developments.

With GP recruitment figures falling we have led the AiT Committee project, ‘Promoting GP Careers’. The aim is to reach out to doctors in training, in university and foundation years and give them an insight into the variety and fulfilment a career as a GP can offer. If you have any links with your university, their medical society or GP society then please do let us know, any help is much appreciated!

We have also contributed to the new Starters’ Guide which will be issued to all new trainees later this year. This includes useful hints and tips that we all wish we knew when we started as well as where to look for more detailed information.

Widening the opportunities for trainee engagement

In addition to our roles on the main committee we also sit as trainee representatives on other committees in the College. Ryan, deputy representative for the Defence deanery, represents trainees on the ePortfolio committee which has been very informative given the problems experienced and significant updates over the last year. Jodie sits on the Patient Partnership Group, a forum for patient and GP representatives to discuss talking points with hot topics currently being patient access and the current RCGP campaign, Put patients first: Back general practice. Jodie also recently attended a political party round-table at the College, allowing doctors at all stages in their careers to present what they believed was important for future party policy. Her main stance was encouraging collaboration between primary care and Government, rather than achieving goals ‘in spite’ of government and vice versa.

This year an academic study is taking place in the Defence deanery aiming to describe the experience in training of Defence GPStRs; the positives, negatives, common difficulties and successes. Along with findings from the recent Care Quality Commission visit to the deanery, this feedback will help to shape training for current and future military GPs, optimising each trainee’s experience.

We hope in our second year we can build on the achievements of the first, take our projects further and continue to develop communication with trainees. Of course, a big part of improving our service to you and our ability to represent you, relies on contact with you so please do get in touch with us with any problems or feedback. We are always keen to hear from the trainees we represent!

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Jodie Blackadder-Coward and Ryan Thomas
Defence Deanery

It has been a busy year on the AiT Committee representing the mighty Defence deanery. What have we been doing and where do we go from here?
Supporting improvements in training and contracts

It has been a busy year for the GPTSC. Some important issues have arisen and have been tackled whilst others continue to be on the agenda for the foreseeable future.

The sub-committee updated the framework for the GP trainee contract following discussions with the Committee of GP Educators (COGPED) and NHS Employers and the new version was released in March 2014.

The GPSTC is currently involved in ongoing negotiations regarding a formal unified UK contract for all junior doctors which includes GP trainees. This proposed contract for GP trainees would be a significant departure from the current framework contract which is not negotiated with government. We hope the new contract will enhance the existing terms and conditions and subsequently provide improved training opportunities and work-life balance.

Following the conclusion of the judicial review of the Clinical Skills Assessment, the BMA is working with stakeholders from across the profession to address the issue of differential pass rates in postgraduate exams. We hope that quality of training as well as assessment features heavily in this work and that a practical solution to addressing the issues is agreed.

Following the publication of the Shape of Training review, there is an expected overhaul of the postgraduate training of doctors. The implications of this for enhanced GP training are not clear as yet, however the BMA will continue to be heavily involved to ensure that the future of GP training is secure.

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Dr Krishna Kasaraneni (Chair) and Dr Sangeetha Sornalingam (Deputy Chair)

The remit of the BMA GP Trainees' sub-committee (GPTSC) is broad and covers all matters concerning GP trainees such as education, training, employment and terms and conditions of service amongst other issues. The GPTSC works closely with the AiT Committee in representing the interests of the GP trainees nationally.
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