RCGP WALES
Local Advocate Programme

A commitment to improve patient care
Introduction
The development of multidisciplinary community based health care is a key priority for Welsh Government and all Health Boards. This leaflet provides a brief overview of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Wales Advocate Programme, through which experienced GPs are available to support Health Boards, sharing expertise and advice to inform service development. Each Health Board has a local GP Advocate - details of how to access the programme are included on page 4. Advocates have also established a network to share expertise and offer problem-solving advice, which will be a valuable resource for NHS Wales.

College Programme background
RCGP is the professional membership body and guardian of standards for family doctors in the UK, working to promote excellence in primary healthcare. The College has a wealth of expertise, including evidence from a wide range of new multidisciplinary models of care that have been developed to meet changing needs.

In 2017 the College provided funding to devolved nations in recognition of the important contribution that professional expertise can make to policy development and delivery. RCGP Wales launched a Local Advocates Programme, identifying an experienced GP to support each Health Board.

Advocates provide direct access to the work of the College and can identify appropriate expertise to support Health Boards with strategic healthcare planning and service delivery in the Welsh context. General Practice has a particular focus on holistic, personalised care, first point of contact services and the delivery of public health programmes. The Advocates play a key role in the College’s commitment to improve the quality of patient care and sharing of good practice. A key Advocate document is the RCGP Wales ‘Essential Principles’¹ which seeks to guide change in how general practice and primary care is delivered.

Welsh Perspective
The ‘Plan for a Primary Care Service for Wales to March 2018’ prioritised local planning, improved access and quality, equitable access, development of a skilled local workforce and building strong leadership. In ‘A Healthier Wales’, the Welsh Government has committed to progress this vision to offer a wider range of professionally led services and support through the established Cluster networks. The Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care has described the need for ‘A revolution from within’ to transform health and social care in Wales. The review recognised the importance of engagement of front line clinical teams in the assessment of local needs and priorities to develop appropriate solutions.

General Practice teams have a central role in Cluster networks, using their knowledge of patient and carer needs and experiences to ensure that resources are used most effectively to meet local priorities. As Health Boards increase the devolution of decision making and resources closer to local communities, this expertise will continue to inform local developments. RCGP Advocates will support this work and the wider National Transformation Programme by facilitating links to national and international professional expertise, including the RCGP Clinical Innovation and Research Centre² which contributes to the changing face of primary healthcare by delivering excellence in clinical priorities, innovation, quality³ improvement and research.

² Clinical Innovation and Research Centre - http://bit.ly/2AFw87Q
The College supports a network of local GP groups called Faculties to enable the sharing of best practice and the exchange of ideas at a regional level. Advocates will facilitate access to these networks, and by working with Health Boards will be able to identify shared priorities that can be supported.

Advocates are connected to the growing evidence from UK and international work of new models of care, enhanced multi-disciplinary teams, integration of services and access to expert medical generalists working in the community.

Sharing Insight
RCGP Advocates understand issues faced in front line clinical practice. They will be informed about the wider health and social care agenda and well placed to promote a shared understanding of local issues. As champions for the safety and quality of patient care, the Advocates will help to articulate priorities for change and workable solutions. Expertise in whole person, coordinated, patient centred care and multidisciplinary team working is particularly important to ensure high quality, efficient and effective services for the changing needs of the population.

Promoting shared values

Strong professional relationships are essential to ensure effective communication and trust at a time of rapid service transformation and high system pressures.

Advocates will cultivate key stakeholder relationships and promote the values of the College which recognise excellence in team working through an annual awards ceremony.

Relationship continuity is also a core feature of high quality primary care clinical practice and is greatly valued by patients and carers. Effective team working is essential to ensure continuity of care and the quality and safety of services provided. RCGP Advocates promote the College values of excellence, teamwork, leadership and care, to ensure focus on shared goals as services are developed.

Core College values
As appointed representatives, RCGP Advocates uphold the core College values which are excellence, teamwork, leadership and care.

The College has identified four objectives to achieve over the next three years:

1. Shape the future of General Practice.
2. Ensure GP education meets the changing needs of UK primary care.
3. Grow and support a strong, engaged membership.
4. Be the voice of the GP (influence).

Advocates are champions of both a professional body and charity subject to the rules of the Charity Commission.

Contacting the Programme
To contact your local GP Advocate, please make contact in the first instance with the local faculty and/or RCGP Wales welshc@rcgp.org.uk

For more information on RCGP Wales and Welsh Faculties please go to http://bit.ly/2O529Ib

Feedback
We would welcome your feedback on the Advocate Programme and suggestions for future development. Please contact the Programme Manager 020 3188 7768 welshc@rcgp.org.uk