**Foreword**

The Royal College of General Practitioners has 32 Faculties across the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. It also has a Faculty for overseas members. The Faculties have played a central role in delivering excellent services to members ever since the College was founded in 1952, advancing the organisation’s mission to promote the highest standards in general practice – by delivering much-valued education and networking events at the local level. The Faculties vary hugely in size. At the beginning of 2016, Midland Faculty was the largest with 4,041 members, and North Wales Faculty was the smallest with 345 members. In recent years, different Faculties have started to forge ahead and innovate in different areas – such as running expansive education programmes, setting up mentoring schemes to support local GPs, and engaging with politicians on behalf of local members. Since the summer of 2014:

- Midland Faculty has run 48 education and networking events, with 1,989 attendees, in one 12-month period
- South East Wales Faculty has set up a GP Society at Cardiff University, to promote general practice to medical students, which now has more than 150 members, and
- North West England Faculty has attracted more than 150 attendees to its 2015 AGM at the Old Trafford football stadium in Manchester.

During the same period:

- Wessex Faculty has started to provide education updates using webinars
- Midland Faculty has produced an animated video to promote general practice which, at the time of writing, has had almost 4,000 views on YouTube, and
- South East Wales and North Wales Faculties have both had Faculty meetings addressed by Welsh Health Minister Mark Drakeford.

In addition:

- Wessex Faculty has built up a proactive Twitter account, through which its education and networking events are promoted to local members.
- Humber and the Ridings Faculty has acted as a local voice of general practice, through their Chair Dr Mike Holmes having given a range of local BBC radio interviews, and
- Sheffield Faculty has abandoned usual protocol and run a regular Faculty Board meeting without the usual agenda – and as a result substantially increased the number of GPs attending its regular meetings going forward.

In the face of the unprecedented resourcing crisis in general practice, it is crucial that the College offers the best possible services to its members and ensures that all of them have an excellent experience of membership, wherever they live or practice. The Faculties are increasingly at the forefront of what the College provides for the nation’s GPs, and as the Faculties increasingly innovate and work together in the spirit of ‘One College’, they are also sharing new ideas and best practice more than ever before. This is primarily being done through the annual Faculty innovation workshops, held across the UK each spring, and the Faculty sessions at the College’s annual conference. We hope this guide will take that sharing of new thinking a step further. There are examples of innovation taking place across the Faculty network and there will inevitably be some excellent instances of best practice in providing excellent member services to its members and ensuring that all of them have an excellent experience of membership, wherever they live or practice.

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Supporting members through education and networking events

The College’s Faculties have improved the quality of general practice in their local areas throughout their existence, by delivering comprehensive programmes of high-quality education and networking events.

Sixty-four years after the inception of the College, it is clear that, through an effective education and networking programme, a Faculty can provide education for the equivalent of up to half of its membership, or more, each year – thereby providing local members with excellent value for money and playing a key role in improving the quality of general practice in the locale.

For instance, between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, the Faculties that provided education and networking events to the highest number of people were:

- Midland Faculty, with 48 events, attended by 1,589 delegates, compared with 4,041 members (as of 1 October 2015)
- Mersey Faculty, with 43 events, attended by 1,353 delegates, compared with 2,096 members
- Wessex Faculty, with 36 events, attended by 1,026 delegates, compared with 2,425 members
- South London Faculty, with 29 events attended by 1,021 delegates, compared with 1,937 members
- North and West London Faculty, with 37 events, attended by 947 delegates, compared with 2,014 members
- North East England Faculty, with 23 events, attended by 764 delegates, compared with 1,289 members
- North West England Faculty, with 27 events, attended by 757 delegates, compared with 3,136 members
- Severn Faculty, with 12 events, attended by 721 delegates, compared with 1,035 members
- Vale of Trent Faculty, with 26 events, attended by 718 delegates, compared with 1,560 members, and
- East Scotland Faculty, with 24 events, attended by 707 delegates, compared with 572 members.

RCGP Northern Ireland, which operates as a Faculty as well as a Devolved Council, also runs a vibrant education programme and during the same period, held:

- Fourteen events, with 360 attendees, compared with 1,364 members.

In total, between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, more than 15,600 delegates attended 529 Faculty education and networking events across the UK. Many Faculties are working hard to expand their programmes of education and networking events. Over the past six years, for example, North East England Faculty has increased its offering to local members from between five and eight events per year to an annual figure of more than 20 – a total which is still increasing. This is largely due to having a paid Education Lead Director, who has been able to drive the development of the programme. With the Faculty having recently appointed an Events Administrator it will be able to run even more courses in the future. The Faculty’s education programme is a varied one, and it caters for GPs at all stages of their career – the trainer element of which is a collaboration with the Northern Deanery. It provides a varied programme including inspirational professional support offerings, as well as a dedicated core of CPD courses. Wessex Faculty provides additional support within its MRCPGP training programme, by offering a series of CSA preparation DVDs and case cards to assist registrars in developing their consultation skills. Other courses are chosen and run based on which ones prove to be the most popular, whether due to new developments in a particular area or to meet specific needs. Feedback is always requested, primarily online, which further aids the selection and refining process, as well as ensuring high quality levels are maintained and a continuous cycle of improvement.

During the period between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, the most popular education and networking events run by the Faculties were:

- GP trainers’ conference, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 134 delegates
- GP Excellence Awards and Michael Lennard Reception, run by Severn Faculty, attended by 140 delegates
- Nottingham GP refresher course, a partnership event in March 2015, run by Vale of Trent Faculty, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust and Nottingham City Hospital Postgraduate Education Centre, attended by 137 delegates

“More than 15,600 delegates attended 529 Faculty education and networking events in one year.”

ST3 Leavers’ Conference, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 133 delegates

Nottingham GP’ refresher course, a partnership event in October 2014, run by Vale of Trent Faculty, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust and Nottingham City Hospital Postgraduate Education Centre, attended by 119 delegates

AKT, run by Wessex Faculty, attended by 114 delegates

Annual Symposium, run by East Anglia Faculty, attended by 114 delegates

Menopause and HRT, run by East England Faculty, attended by 109 delegates

Careers’ Fair, run by North East England Faculty, attended by 104 delegates

Sporting Injuries, run by Mersey Faculty, attended by 104 delegates

ST1 Starters’ Conference, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 104 delegates

GP Hot Topics, run by Mersey Faculty, attended by 103 delegates

GP Update event, run by Humber and the Ridings Faculty, attended by 100 delegates

Gala Dinner and Gale Lecture, run by Severn Faculty, attended by 95 delegates

Annual Meeting and Awards Evening, run by Mersey Faculty, attended by 92 delegates

Annual Symposium, run by Thames Valley Faculty, attended by 92 delegates

Safeguarding the Future City Health Conference, run by RCGP London, attended by 91 delegates

Summer Ball, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 91 delegates, and

Breach Conference, run by North East London Faculty, attended by 88 delegates.

A number of events that were popular during the period between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015 were the Education and Social Evenings (EASE), which were held at rotate between the three London Faculties – North East London, North and West London and South London – each month.
Hints and tips:

- Consider what would be the ideal size and content for your education and networking programme—in order to be of maximum benefit for local members.
- Consider having a paid Education Lead/ Education Director on the team to drive the development of your education programme—and set clear objectives in advance of how you want the post holder to achieve.
- Consider choosing courses that have already proven popular elsewhere across the Faculty network, such as those mentioned above, or think about tailoring to the education Leads at the Faculties running the most extensive education and networking programmes.
- Consider running Education and Social Evening (EASE) events.
- Consider running events for the wider general practice workforce such as those for Practice Nurses or Practice Managers.
- Consider selecting courses that you know will be popular with GPs locally.
- Consider delivering education via webinars and live events with the local Faculty.
- Explore ways to run more free events for members—as this will be seen as value adding and of real benefit.
- Ensure you use the Faculty Quality Assurance checklist, which can be seen in the Regional Engagement Manager guidance.
- Ensure that as part of the quality assurance process, you analyse your course feedback. This will ensure that you can reflect on what delegates have said and assist you to make the course better in the future.
- Consider your Faculty’s stance on sponsorship: on the one hand, accepting sponsorship may create an entitle financial support from organisations that members of your Faculty might not come across, on the other hand, accepting sponsorship may allow you to run a wider and more comprehensive education programme for the benefit of local GPs. (For further information see RCGP’s guidance on advertising or sponsorship, which you can obtain via your Regional Engagement Manager or Faculty Administrator).

Helping members through mentoring schemes

There are seven mentoring schemes currently being run across the Faculties. They are administered by Faculty staff, and depending on interest and demand from members, some schemes have up to 30 active relationships, while others have much smaller numbers. Some of the schemes concentrate on promoting resilience—and people know will be popular with GPs locally. The mentoring scheme run by the Midland Faculty helps doctors experiencing a variety of personal, professional and academic difficulties. The programme started in 2008, and has received financial support from both Health Education West Midlands and Worcestershire SHA. In total, 124 GPs and 49 dentists/consultants have benefited from the programme—which offers five one-to-one sessions with an experienced professional colleague.

All of those GPs who have been supported through the scheme have given positive feedback, with many commenting on how it has helped them to have a more positive view of their future in general practice. Tamar Faculty has just started its own resilience scheme for newly qualified GPs in order to develop and equip them with the skills needed to survive and thrive in general practice. The programme—which is being administered with the support of Severn Faculty—is being initially funded for two years by Health Education South West.

To promote the scheme, Health Education South West is circulating an email to all qualifying GPs to inform them about the programme. In order to meet the demand from local members for more help with coping with the challenges of modern general practice, a number of Faculties are now also starting to run resilience courses.

Tamar Faculty is also due to run a resilience event in January 2016. However, not all mentoring schemes focus on resilience. Severn Faculty has been running a mentoring scheme since 2010 which aims to provide confidential mentoring support to newly qualified GPs. The programme was an initiative developed by a group of local GPs who originally received joint funding from the Severn School of Primary Care, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and the Faculty itself. The scheme has so far matched 40 mentors to mentees. It is anticipated that the relationship will last for up to two years, depending on particular circumstances. The first meeting is face to face at a mutually agreed, preferably neutral, venue but afterwards the mentor and mentee may choose to have email or telephone contact as well as, or instead of, face to face meetings.

Mentors in the scheme are supported through training and feedback and receive a small bursary in recognition of their contribution. The scheme is open to GPs within the first two years following qualification. It aims to help them with the transition from vocational training schemes to working in independent practices, and is open to anyone beginning work in Severn, regardless of where they trained.

Other Faculty mentoring schemes are currently running in North Scotland, South East Scotland and a partnership of the three Welsh Faculties (South East Wales, South West Wales and North Wales). The programme started in 2008, and has received financial support from both Health Education West Midlands and Worcestershire SHA. In total, 124 GPs and 49 dentists/consultants have benefited from the programme—which offers five one-to-one sessions with an experienced professional colleague. All of those GPs who have been supported through the scheme have given positive feedback, with many commenting on how it has helped them to have a more positive view of their future in general practice. Tamar Faculty has just started its own resilience scheme for newly qualified GPs in order to develop and equip them with the skills needed to survive and thrive in general practice. The programme—which is being administered with the support of Severn Faculty—is being initially funded for two years by Health Education South West.

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Engaging with politicians

As the College tries to shape the healthcare policy agenda in order to secure more resources, and a bigger workforce, for general practice, it engages with both Westminster politicians and those in the devolved legislatures. This engagement has traditionally come through College HQ or the three Devolved Councils. However, as all parts of the College have been working together in the spirit of ‘One College’ working to support the organisation’s campaign for more resources, Put patients first: Back general practice campaign, with non-members. Dr Hussey was invited to a dinner with Board Chief Executive Simon Dean – to address a meeting in December, which was attended by almost 30 members. In March 2015, South East Wales Faculty invited Dr Hussey to a dinner with members and non-members. Dr Hussey discussed cluster development in primary care with up to 50 attendees. Faculties are encouraged to engage with local politicians – either through inviting them to Faculty meetings or by setting up visits to practices, so that politicians can see what everyday general practice is like. Where an engagement has been successfully secured, Faculties are encouraged to discuss the matter in advance with the College’s Policy and Campaigns team. To discuss how best to make use of the opportunity, contact Assistant Director of Policy and Campaigns Mark Thomas at mark.thomas@rcgp.org.uk. Faculties can also access information and resources on practice visits on the Put patients first: Back general practice campaign microsite at rcgp.org.uk/campaign.

HINTS AND TIPS:

• Consider inviting a politician – with links to your Faculty locale – to a meeting in order to allow local members to tell them what it’s really like to work as a family doctor in the current era.
• If you manage to secure a booking, publicise the meeting as widely as possible and you may be able to secure a substantial turn out, and speak to the College’s Policy and Campaigns team to discuss how best to make use of the opportunity.
• Once you start to engage with politicians make sure that in your Faculty capacity you do not endorse or oppose any particular political party.

Hints and tips:

• Consider what key messages you might be able to communicate to target audiences via a video posted on YouTube – for instance, to highlight the innovative work of the Faculty or to promote general practice as a career.
• Consider the way you are communicating the message, as successful videos tend to be fast-paced and sometimes have no narration at all.

The animated video promoted by Midland Faculty has been viewed almost 4,000 times on YouTube.”

YouTube and other internet sites present Faculties with new ways of communicating key messages to their target audiences, through video posting of messages.

One Faculty that has particularly embraced this opportunity is Midland Faculty, which over recent months, has been promoting a video on YouTube, by Wolverhampton GP Dr Jamie Hynes, that seeks to promote general practice as a career to medical students and trainee doctors. The video, which has been viewed almost 4,000 times on YouTube, features a poem and an animation about general practice – and won a competition for local members run by the Faculty during summer 2015.

Dr Hynes, firstly drew the graphic, wrote the poem and then recorded it in video format on his mobile phone. Having seen the video win first prize in the competition, Faculty Chair Dr Jonathan Leach then approached Dr Hynes to see if he would be interested in re-recording it using professional equipment and utilising the input of a graphic designer. The video that can be accessed on YouTube is the re-recorded version, and it has won plaudits from GPs across the UK. The video has been viewed over 3,000 views and resulted in some press & TV coverage too.

Both videos generated a great deal of interest. It is thought that it stimulated interest in some other lines of work too – such as teaching and the police. Social media was an important part of maximising publicity.

To view the Midland Faculty video go to:
• youtube.com/watch?v=YoUdK0vKkDk
To view the James Bond-style Arran recruitment video go to:
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Hints and tips:

• Consider what key messages you might be able to communicate to target audiences via a video posted on YouTube – for instance, to highlight the innovative work of the Faculty or to promote general practice as a career.
• Consider the length of the video, as successful online videos are very short and as a rule never run for more than three minutes.
• Consider the way you are communicating the message, as successful videos tend to be fast-paced and sometimes have no narration at all.

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Using social media

In recent years, many Faculties have started to engage with their members via social media. At the time of writing, there were 21 Faculty Facebook accounts and 21 Faculty Twitter accounts. These accounts are primarily used to advertise various courses and events happening across the Faculties. Wessex has a Communication Lead, Dr Beth Hockley, who tweets regularly on their Faculty Twitter account, @WRCGP. At the time of going to press, the account had more than 180 followers and had tweeted over 600 times since being set up. The Wessex Facebook account had, at the time of writing, more than 170 followers and is maintained by Beth and Faculty staff. Content on both accounts is primarily about forthcoming events and relevant press stories. Beth and her Faculty Provost, Dr.

Eileen Gorrod, were part of the panel at the Faculty fringe session at the College annual conference 2015 in Glasgow, where they spoke passionately about engaging with members through social media, how social media supports Faculty activity and how our Faculties need to identify the most effective channels through which to communicate with the new generation of local members coming through.

Midland Faculty has a main Twitter account which can be found @MidRCPG. At the time of writing this account had over 220 followers and is administered by three members of the Faculty board, Dr Duncan Shrewsbury, Dr Sabena Jameel and Dr John Cosgrove. The account regularly tweets on subjects such as recruitment, Faculty events, workforce stability and press stories relating to general practice.

There is another account for First5s, @RCPGFive5Mid, which has over 100 followers and is administered by the Midland’s First5 lead, Dr Dilsher Singh and tweets about Faculty events and, current press stories relating to general practice.

Meanwhile, a National Faculty Office Twitter account has recently been set up, when it was recognised that a dedicated and live Faculty media channel would be complementary to the Faculty sessions at the 2015 annual conference, as well as being useful as an ongoing, proactive tool to promote and highlight Faculty issues.

The account took just a few minutes to register, and log-in details were shared with several National Faculty Office staff. This has enabled @RCGFaculties to tweet reports and responses from right across the UK. Allowing multiple-person access has had the additional benefit of sharing the responsibility for maintaining output, thereby moderating workload. In the few months since it was set up the National Faculty Office Twitter account has already attracted well over 110 followers.

Over the last two years, the College has generated a record amount of media coverage across the UK – securing nine national newspaper front page splashes and the highest media profile in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in living memory. As the College increasingly uses the media to get across its key messages – such as the need for more resources for general practice, and a bigger workforce – an increasing number of Faculties are communicating key messages on behalf of general practice to local and regional audiences via television and radio. In order to provide support to those Faculties who want to engage via local and regional broadcast media, College HQ provided media training just over a year ago for 29 Faculty Board representatives. The training was highly rated by the participants and gave them the confidence to go on and do a number of high profile interviews.

One of the attendees, Midland Faculty Board Chair Dr Jonathan Leach, gave 15 media interviews to the BBC in 2015. This included a day when he spoke to nine local BBC radio stations as well as Sky TV about a story on antibiotic resistance.

Since the training, Dr Cathy Sloan, Provost for South East Wales Faculty and Dr Rebecca Payne, South East Wales Faculty Board member and RCPG Wales Chair have regularly appeared on local and national media to debate issues relating to general practice.

Chair of Humber and the Ridings Faculty Dr Mike Holmes has also spoken a number of times with the BBC, including with Radio London, Radio Stoke, Radio Coventry and BBC Radio Warwickshire about clinical pharmacists working in GP practices, and to BBC Cambridge and BBC York regarding funding cuts affecting GP practices in rural areas.

North West England Faculty member Dr Farrah Sheikh has done numerous live TV interviews with BBC1 Breakfast News. She has also done live radio interviews and interviews with the BBC website. Meanwhile, East Anglia Faculty Board member Dr Matthew Piccaver has appeared on Radio 4 Live, and also written a number of articles for newspapers, including the Independent and local publications.

Giving TV and radio interviews

Hints and tips:

- Consider who would be best to represent your Faculty as the local voice of general practice.
- Consider which Faculty Board member might be interested in being the local voice of general practice.
- Consider who would be best to represent your Faculty as the local voice of general practice.
- Once you have identified a Faculty Board member who would like to engage with regional stakeholders via local TV and radio, contact your Regional Engagement Manager to see whether training can be organised and to ensure that their name is added to our UK-wide list of Faculty media spokespeople so that we can put the local and regional media in touch with them when we are publicizing a particular storyline.

Hints and tips:

- If you don’t already have a Facebook or Twitter account, explore the idea of setting up a social media account for your Faculty, as a way of engaging with members – especially younger ones.
- Identify member support – perhaps an AI or medical student member – to keep the accounts active with new information on a regular basis.
- Please ensure you follow the guidance set out in the College’s Social Media Highway Code, which can be found at: rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/social-media-highway-code.aspx
Promoting general practice through engaging with GP societies

“Faculties are making a difference at local level by establishing partnerships with GP societies.”

The society was set up by Dr Hannah Willoughby, a GP in Merthyr Tydfil, with Board member Professor Kamilla Hawthorne, who was based at the university, told the Faculty Board that there was no GP society then but that the students there were keen to have one. She said she thought it would be a good opportunity for the Faculty to get involved.

When the idea of a GP society was put forward, the reaction from students was positive and the first meeting of the society, held in September 2014, was attended by 60 students, Faculty members and university staff – with the offer of free pizza being seen as one of the main draws!

Marketing itself as a society ‘set up for those with a special interest in all things GP-related’, the GP Society offers members an insight into life as a GP, a range of talks and events and opportunities to attend surgeries and placements.

It comprises members from across all year groups and numbers are increasing all the time.

While a number of Faculties have links with student societies or student reps, the Cardiff University GP Society was created in partnership with students. Dr Willoughby believes this is fundamental to its success.

Dr Willoughby says: “We knew from the start that we wanted the society to be student-led, with open access to, and support from, the Faculty. We also wanted to be responsive to needs – to listen to what students wanted and to try to provide it.

“I act as the link between the students and the Faculty and help them to arrange speakers and placements – people and places they wouldn’t otherwise have access to. We’ve managed to secure a great range of speakers, including representatives from the Welsh Government, academics and the BMA, but the nice thing is that students really want to hear from ‘normal’ GPs, so we make sure there is plenty of face to face contact with working GPs.”

Although Hannah was set on a career in general practice while she was at university, it wasn’t until a GP placement in her fifth year that she was able to find out about what such a career actually involved. She believes there is a gap in the market that GP societies can fill – and a crucial role for the College in setting them up to market general practice as a rewarding career option.

“Recruitment is on all of our agendas and we are missing a trick if we don’t engage with potential GPs early on,” says Hannah, President of the Cardiff University GP Society. “The society is a fantastic platform to showcase what general practice is about – particularly to undergraduate students who don’t engage with potential GPs early on.”

The Faculty Board provides financial and speaker support for GP society meetings, including inviting GPs to speak at the AGM.

Another Faculty that works closely with medical students is Midland Faculty, which works with the GP societies at the University of Birmingham, University of Warwick and Keele University. To coordinate its work with the GP societies it has recently appointed a university liaison fellow.

A number of other Faculties work closely with GP societies, including North East Scotland Faculty (which works with the University of Aberdeen), East Scotland Faculty (University of Dundee), Tamar Faculty (Exeter and Plymouth Universities), Leicester Faculty (Keele and Leicester Universities), Mersey Faculty (University of Liverpool), Yorkshire Faculty (University of Leeds), Sheffield Faculty (University of Sheffield), Humberside and the Ridings ( Hull York Medical School) and North West England Faculty (Manchester and Lancashire Universities).

HINTS AND TIPS

• Consider setting up a GP society at the university in your local area, especially if there isn’t one there already.

• If you are working with students to set up a GP society from scratch, consider following the model of the one set up by the South East Wales Faculty. For further guidance on setting up a new GP society or engaging more closely with medical students, contact College Vice Chair and South East Wales Faculty Board member Professor Kamilla Hawthorne at kamilla.hawthorne@rcgp.org.uk.

• If there is a GP society at your local university that you engage with already, consider establishing links with the medical students so that you can give them your support and guidance, and therefore ultimately help more students into general practice.
Holding events for trainee doctors and medical students

There was a substantial increase in the number of people applying for a place in general practice training after both rounds of events, and while it is impossible to say to what extent these events had an impact on the figures it is undoubted that the overall effect was extremely positive.

Two Faculty-run recruitment events – staged by East Scotland Faculty and South East Scotland Faculty – also took place in Scotland during October 2015, replicating the success of those in England. These events attracted more than 60 medical students and foundation year doctors – with over 94% responding that events had made them more likely to apply for general practice.

In an attempt to reach out to an even younger demographic, Sheffield Faculty has recently been promoting general practice as a career to pupils at Ecclesfield School, the largest secondary school in Sheffield.

Having supported the school to explain the different career opportunities in the healthcare sector, the Faculty plans to provide a small number of students with the opportunity to visit a local surgery.

Finally, some of those pupils who appear particularly interested in a career in general practice will be offered the chance to shadow a member of the primary care team area for a day.

Hints and tips:

- If you are an English Faculty, consider taking part in the joint College-HEE initiative to promote general practice as a career to trainee doctors and medical students.
- If you are a non-English Faculty, speak to your Regional Engagement Manager to see if there are any initiatives for Faculties to promote general practice to trainee doctors and students in your nation.
- Consider engaging with local schools to promote general practice as a career to younger students.

A t a time when GPs are working longer and longer hours, it can be increasingly difficult for members to travel long distances to attend meetings and events. Therefore a number of Faculties are increasingly considering the possibility of holding meetings or events at locations around the Faculty area, as well as in the main urban centre. ‘College Close By’ is an innovative idea through which Faculties arrange meetings in places other than in the usual town or city.

This approach has been adopted by the East Anglia Faculty – with its quarterly Board meetings being held at locations across the Faculty, in order to make them more accessible to local members.

The Vale of Trent Faculty has approved a budget to run two meetings away from the usual location of Nottingham in 2016. The first two will be held in Mansfield and Lincoln. To attract attendance, the meetings will include a clinical or professional development presentation and discussion as well as a debate, led by a Faculty Board member or former member, on issues such as College benefits and career mentoring. In a further effort to make meetings more accessible for colleagues, Mersey Faculty have enabled Board members to ‘Skype’ into meetings, a move which has allowed those from further afield to take part in key Faculty activities. South West Wales Faculty allows Faculty Board members to dial in to meetings.

Hints and tips:

- Consider how viable it would be to reach out to local members who live some distance from the town or city in which Faculty meetings are usually held, by staging meetings and events in different locations.
- Consider opening up attendance to Board meetings, particularly for those who live far away from the usual location used for Faculty events, by facilitating the use of ‘Skype’ or telephone conferencing.
Revitalising a Faculty Board

When long-standing members of a particular Faculty Board eventually retire or leave the area, and there are few active members left on the Board, it can at times seem like a real challenge to sustain the Faculty, especially when newer GPs in the area seem to have little interest in becoming active in the Faculty. Therefore, it can often require a sustained drive to turn the Faculty around.

In 2008, the South East Wales Faculty Board found itself in a similar situation and decided it was time to take a risk. The Board chose to stage a panel discussion on a controversial ethical topic – ‘Perspectives on Termination’ – prior to its AGM. The Treasurer, Dr Jake Hard and Honorary Secretary, Dr Cathy Sloan invited a speaker to chair a panel, along with a nurse, to talk through the challenges faced by GPs. The result was that 34 members attended the AGM, compared with 11 the year before.

The Faculty have continued to approach their AGM in a similar way each year, with more than 50% of College members being female and a third being from BME backgrounds, it is imperative that each Faculty Board strives to reflect the composition of the workforce in its local area.

The Cumbria Faculty which, over the latter half of 2015, by itself over the latter half of 2015, by
Seminars, talks and debates on topical issues in terms of gender and ethnicity, areas appear to be particularly enthusiastic.

The East Anglia Faculty has adopted a similar approach, with one of their Board meetings consisting of 30 minutes allocated to discuss regular agenda items and the rest left as an open forum, encouraging networking and development sessions. This approach has led to members feeling more engaged with their Faculty and willing to attend Board meetings. The fact that Faculties can hold meetings at which the traditional formal agenda is abandoned and instead run a brainstorming session is one of the best kept secrets at the College.

For those thinking of abandoning the traditional agenda approach in favour of an agenda-less meeting, the College’s Company Secretary Robert Foster says that constitutionally it is very much permissible for Faculties to drop their agenda once a year to have an open forum discussion. Board members can discuss and agree feedback on policy, and other issues outside of the Board meeting, with responses being sent back to the College HQ through the appropriate channels.

Hints and tips:

- Consider whether your Faculty Board would benefit from occasionally abandoning the traditional agenda and holding a brainstorming session instead.
- When holding a topical discussion, consider inviting First5s and AiTs, as they may be more enthusiastic.
- Consider how to ensure that your Faculty is accessible for members of all ages and backgrounds.
- Consider how to get younger members of the College involved, as First5s and AiTs can be particularly enthusiastic.
- Consider whether your Faculty Board reflects the make up of the modern GP workforce in your area, for instance in terms of gender and ethnicity, and types of GP.
- Consider staged events, talks and debates on topical issues in general practice that will encourage people to turn out in numbers.
- Consider inviting speakers with a particular expertise and will therefore attract interest from local GPs who aren’t closely involved in the Faculty.
- Consider abandoning the traditional meeting agenda once a year and instead holding a brainstorming session on an issue of key concern to GPs locally (see next section).
- Consider establishing close links with a GP society at a nearby university and inviting medical students to the Faculty Board meeting.
- Ensure Faculty Board meetings to include student and resident venues that will be accessible for Faculty members of all ages and backgrounds.

The Sheffield Faculty has taken a slightly radical approach to revitalising its Board.

He Sheffield Faculty has taken a slightly radical approach to revitalising its Board. Following a poorly attended AGM – which Faculty Vice Chair Dr Ben Jackson describes as being particularly ‘drab’ – the Board decided to abandon its traditional agenda for its meeting in June 2015 in favour of an informally-structured event. In advance of the meeting, the Faculty of members felt.

The outcomes of this meeting are that Sheffield Faculty now offers greater support to First5s and to medical students – with two student reps now appointed permanently to the Board. There is also a rejuvenated Fellowship Committee that combines research with both patient and medical student reps as members, as well as a much closer working relationship with the Postgraduate Deansery.

ABANDONING THE TRADITIONAL FACULTY AGENDA
Attracting local members to Faculty AGMs

As Faculties increasingly try to engage with a larger number of local GPs, many are taking innovative approaches in an effort to ensure the highest possible turn out of members at their AGMs. In November 2015, the North West England Faculty held their AGM and awards dinner at the Old Trafford football stadium, home to Manchester United, with guest speakers including former Manchester United goalkeeper Alex Stepney and former Manchester United director Alex Ferguson. A total of 23 new members attended the meeting and heard about the work the College does internationally. College Assistant Honorary Treasurer Dr Steve Mowle spoke about his work in South Africa. Overall, there was an impressive turnout of 80 guests.

Hints and tips:

- Consider holding your AGM at an unusual, exciting or headline-grabbing venue.
- Consider inviting a big name speaker to your AGM.
- Consider combining your AGM with an awards ceremony, or with a new member ceremony.

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A poster promoting an event run by RCGP London.

Faculties working in partnership

In recent years, a number of Faculties have formed partnerships with each other in order to deliver enhanced services to members across a region. In 2009, Yorkshire, Sheffield, and Humber and the Ridings Faculties established the White Rose initiative in order to avoid duplication of CSA and AKT courses. The previous month, Mersey Faculty held its AGM and awards dinner at Anfield football stadium, home to Liverpool FC. The evening was hosted by Faculty Provost Dr Shiv Pande and guest speaker was Professor Christopher Dowrick, from University of Liverpool. On the night, the annual RCGP Mersey Faculty Awards offered an opportunity for Primary Care teams to acknowledge their colleagues’ excellence and innovation. The event attracted a healthy turnout of 100 guests. The keynote speaker was Professor Val Wiss, who spoke about the work the College does internationally. College Assistant Honorary Treasurer Dr Steve Mowle spoke about his work in South Africa. Overall, there was an impressive turn out of 80 guests.

Hints and tips:

- Consider areas of work on which your Faculty and others could collaborate across a region, in order to deliver enhanced services to local members.
- Consider areas of work on which your Faculty and others could avoid duplication – and therefore concentrate on delivering enhanced services together.

RCGP London has twice run a City Health Conference, the second of which was held in May last year at 30 Euston Square – delivering an excellent clinical programme to more than 90 delegates. RCGP London also supports the London Journal of Primary Care, an online publication which is disseminated to London members and shines a spotlight on issues affecting London GPs.

RCGP London also recently formed a sub-group, the RCGP London First/ AiT Committee, which is growing in membership and aims to provide support specifically to junior doctors. The Committee held its successful ‘Life after VTS study day’ in June last year, with 125 delegates. During the period between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, RCGP London delivered four education and networking events, which were attended by 170 delegates.

RCGP London meets regularly and is attended by members from across the three London Faculties including the Faculty Chairs, Education Leads and First/AiT representatives, and all London Faculty Board members are invited. The members feed back from their respective Faculties and aim to share best practice and encourage a collaborative rather than competitive approach to support the capital’s GP workforce. RCGP London is attended by members from across the three London Faculties including the Faculty Chairs, Education Leads and First/AiT representatives, and all London Faculty Board members are invited. The members feed back from their respective Faculties and aim to share best practice and encourage a collaborative rather than competitive approach to support the capital’s GP workforce.

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The Faculties are forging ahead and innovating in different areas.

Since the summer of 2014:

- Midland Faculty has run 48 education and networking events, with 1,989 attendees, in one 12-month period.
- South East Wales Faculty has set up a GP Society at Cardiff University, to promote general practice to medical students, which now has more than 150 members.
- North West England Faculty has attracted more than 150 attendees to its 2015 AGM at the Old Trafford football stadium in Manchester.
- Wessex Faculty has started to provide education updates using webinars.
- Midland Faculty has produced an animated video to promote general practice which, at the time of writing, has had almost 4,000 views on YouTube.
- South East Wales and North Wales Faculties have both had Faculty meetings addressed by Welsh Health Minister Mark Drakeford.
- Wessex Faculty has built up a proactive Twitter account, through which its education and networking events are promoted to local members.
- Humber and the Ridings Faculty has acted as a local voice of general practice, through their Chair Dr Mike Holmes having given a range of local BBC radio interviews, and
- Sheffield Faculty has abandoned usual protocol and run a regular Faculty Board meeting without the usual agenda – and as a result substantially increased the number of GPs attending its regular meetings going forward.