



SCOTLAND

RCGP Scottish Council Annual Report 2025



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Chairs' Message

My second year as RCGP Scotland Chair has been a busy one, meeting with stakeholders, advancing my Chair's priority of promoting a career in general practice and ensuring that our profession is top of mind for policy makers and politicians ahead of next year's Scottish Parliament election.

I was delighted to launch my flagship paper [Whole person medical care: The value of the General Practitioner](#) earlier this year. The paper celebrates the unique value that we as GPs bring to patients, communities and society more generally. It is an unapologetic demonstration of why GPs matter, how we have been undervalued and why we must be prioritised from now on.

It has been an important year for general practice in Scotland. In January, First Minister John Swinney announced the Scottish Government had been persuaded of the case that general practice should receive additional funding. In October, the Scottish Government announced an over £500 million investment into general practice following a period of formal dispute with SGPC. These events demonstrate that the College's messaging along with others has made an impact.

Next year's Scottish Parliament election offers a vital opportunity for the College to build on these successes. In September we launched our manifesto [General practice: The solution to the NHS crisis](#) which gained frontpage coverage in The Scotsman. We also held an event in November - well attended by MSPs and stakeholders - that focused on our manifesto and value paper.

Our media coverage has grown substantially this year, and I believe that RCGP Scotland is firmly on the front foot and will play an important role in putting general practice front and centre as we approach the election.

As Chair of RCGP Scotland, I aim to advocate for our members, and I would encourage you to reach out to me or any of the team if you have ideas you would like to discuss. Please do take this the time to read through this annual report to get a fuller picture of the fantastic work of the College across Scotland. We have a small but hard-working team, and I want to end by thanking them for all their efforts.



Dr Chris Provan

Chair of Scottish Council

Engagement with our stakeholders

The Officers of Scottish Council continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders and 2025 has been no exception to this.

We continue to work closely with the BMA Scottish General Practitioners Committee, meeting monthly to discuss the issues facing the profession and over this past year discussions have included continuity of care, GP underemployment, GP quality clusters, enhanced services and the recent funding announcement.

The College has a collaborative working relationship with the Scottish Government's Primary Care Directorate who we meet with every 6 weeks. This year discussions have included continuity of care, GP underemployment, the Scottish Government's Recruitment and Retention Action Plan, Community Link Workers, workforce data, the Service Renewal Framework and Primary Care Route Map and the Early Career GP Fellowship Framework.

We have quarterly meetings with Professor Nitin Gambhir, Postgraduate Dean at NHS Education for Scotland and this year have focused on the development of the Early Career GP Fellowship Framework and new GP retention scheme, 2+1 training, support for IMGs and First5s.

We also meet regularly with Dr Carey Lunan, Chair of the Scottish Deep End Steering Group to discuss collaborative working on the health inequalities agenda.

We have two seats on the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland (the Scottish Academy) and Dr Chris Williams is currently Vice Chair. The Academy meets quarterly in-person and members catch up informally on a regular basis.

Other stakeholders we have met with throughout the year include:

- Healthcare Improvement Scotland
- General Medical Council
- Scottish School of Primary Care
- Centre for Sustainable Delivery
- National Association of Link Workers
- Public Health Scotland
- Audit Scotland
- British Dental Association
- Queens Nursing Institute of Scotland
- Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
- Scottish Heads of Department – regarding supporting academic general practice
- Centre for Workforce Supply
- Prostate Scotland

The Officers also attended a number of conferences, roundtables and parliamentary receptions:

- SNUG Conference
- Scottish Academic Primary Care Conference
- RPS/Marie Curie - The Daffodil Standards for Community Pharmacy
- GMC education roundtable
- Roundtable - Mental health: a multi-sector approach to tackling a national crisis
- MDDUS parliamentary reception – on moral distress impacting on clinicians
- Marie Curie Scotland Great Daffodil Appeal Parliamentary Reception
- Scottish Community Link Worker Network's Annual Conference
- GMC UK Advisory Forum
- Roundtable 'Regulating for the Workforce of the Future: Addressing the Healthcare Workforce Crisis in Scotland and Ireland'
- Scottish Labour roundtable on cancer policy
- Marie Curie's 2026 Scottish Parliament Election Campaign Launch

You can find further details on all of the Officers meetings in the quarterly Officer Engagements paper which is submitted to Scottish Council.

Engagement with the Scottish Government

On 22 January Dr Provan was invited to Bute House to meet with the **First Minister John Swinney**, along with other medical royal colleges and healthcare leaders. Dr Provan presented our messages clearly, emphasising the potential a strong general practice holds to meet the ambitions of this government, and therefore the critical need for greater investment and long-term strategy on workforce. The following week we were delighted to hear the First Minister give a speech on NHS renewal, stating “We have listened, and we have been persuaded,” and committing to a plan to ensure that a greater proportion of new NHS funding goes to primary and community care, resulting in GP services that are easier for people to access.



On 12 March, the **Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care Neil Gray MSP** visited Dr Provan's practice in Aberdeen. Practice visits are invaluable opportunities to demonstrate the reality of our messaging, and we showed the Cabinet Secretary an overloaded daily advice list and the impact of workload pressures, the benefit of the MDT when well-integrated, and the need to address capacity issues in practice premises.

Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership have produced a [video](#) featuring Chris' practice in Aberdeen which highlights what a busy day in general practice entails.

We met again with the Cabinet Secretary in June when we focused solely on the **RCGP Scotland policy paper [Whole person medical care: The value of the General Practitioner](#)**, talking him through its key messages. The following week the Cabinet Secretary visited Dr Chris Williams' practice in Grantown-on-Spey which was an excellent opportunity to reiterate our key messages, and to show a busy day in rural practice. During the summer East Scotland Faculty Chair Dr Munro Stewart hosted the Cabinet Secretary at his practice in Dundee. They toured the practice, highlighting the urgent issues of investment and rising workload, as well as the difference electronic prescribing would make.

In August, the officer team met with **Caroline Lamb, Chief Executive of NHS Scotland and Director-General of Health and Social Care**, and other senior representatives from the Scottish Government. They discussed how to recognise and embed the value of the GP within the Scottish Government's strategic programme of health and social care reform, looking at the future of the medical workforce, the reality of shifting resources into primary care, and the data general practice needs to better tell its story. A follow up meeting took place in early November to take a high level look at delivery of the Service Renewal Framework and the new funding agreement, identifying learning from previous policy implementation successes and failures.

Engagement with the Scottish Parliament

In late June Dr Chris Provan and Dr Chris Williams both appeared as witnesses to give evidence to the **Public Audit Committee** at the Scottish Parliament on the implementation of the 2018 GP contract. This was prompted by the Audit Scotland report. The Officers welcomed the report's clarity on the pressing need for a fundamental reprioritisation of general practice within the Scottish Government's healthcare strategy, and its recommendations on workforce, data, premises, GP Quality Clusters, and investment.



We have had several opportunities in the Scottish Parliament to brief MSPs in debates. In January we briefed ahead of the **Scottish Labour debate on the Health and Social Care Workforce**, with positive mentions from the Scottish Greens and the Scottish Conservatives. We also briefed for the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee **remote and rural healthcare inquiry** debate, and the members business debate from Scottish Conservative MSP Tim Eagle on the same subject and received mention from the Scottish Greens. This was a good opportunity to voice our support for ScotGem. In February we briefed for a debate on **Employer National Insurance contributions**, and the

Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Liberal Democrats both spoke in support of mitigating costs for general practice. Following the debate, the Scottish Government invited the College to attend a roundtable on the topic.

Dr Chris Provan and Dr Sigi Joseph met with **Carol Mochan MSP** (Scottish Labour) to discuss women's health and the general practice workload and workforce crises. In August, Kevin Stewart MSP visited Dr Chris Provan's practice in Aberdeen to discuss both the local and national issues facing general practice and patients.

In October Dr Chris Williams gave evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on **ADHD and ASD pathways and support**, during which he argued for greater recognition of the pressures on general practice, stronger regulation of private providers, and funding for GPs who choose to enter into shared care agreements.



The Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

The College has been engaging with the **Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill** throughout this Council year. Dr Provan appeared before the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on 19 November 2024 at Stage One of the legislative process as a witness to give oral evidence on the Bill, along with the British Medical Association, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, and the Royal College of Nursing. On that date UK Council had not yet voted on whether the College would survey members on the College position again, so Dr Provan set out the College position at that time which was opposed to a change in the law on assisted dying, and explained the future discussion planned for Council held in November 2024. He also shared our key concerns with the legislation as drafted which places GPs at the core of the proposed service. You can read [his evidence here](#).



On Tuesday 13 May the Scottish Parliament voted in favour of the Bill at Stage 1 (of 3) of the legislative process. We provided a briefing for all MSPs ahead of this debate, setting out clearly the College position, adopted by UK Council in November 2024, of neither supporting nor opposing a change in the legislation on assisted dying, but also sharing our significant concerns that the draft legislation did not meet the RCGP set of principles that should be applied to legislation.

Subsequently, we have worked in collaboration with the British Medical Association Scotland (BMA Scotland), Royal College of Nursing (RCN), Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), and Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland (QNIS) on several amendments, and with the BMA on a further selection. In October, Dr Provan met with Liam McArthur MSP, the Bill owner, to discuss these principles and why they should be included into the legislation. The Bill is now at Stage 2, at which the Health, Sport and Social Care Committee debate and vote on amendments. In advance of these sessions, RCGP Scotland provided a briefing for MSPs, which set out the amendments that we support and recommend be voted for. You can read that briefing [here](#).



In addition to engaging with the Bill, we have also met with Hospice UK and attended the Cross Party Group on Palliative Care.

Response to consultations

In this past Council year, RCGP Scotland has responded to 16 consultations on behalf of members. We would like to thank those members who have contributed their expertise to these consultation responses which have included:

- Scottish Government's Palliative Care Strategy
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland's Draft cervical screening standards
- Abortion Law Review - Evidence on pathways
- Right to Addiction Recovery (Scotland) Bill
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland's Palliative Care Guidelines
- Glasgow's Safer Drug Consumption Facility Inquiry
- Climate change duties - draft statutory guidance for public bodies
- Scottish Cancer Referral Guidelines Review
- Assisted Dying (for Terminally Ill Adults) Bill

- Scottish Government's Rural Delivery Plan
- Inquiry into substance misuse in Scottish prisons
- ADHD and ASD pathways and support
- Polypharmacy guidance: appropriate prescribing, making medicines safe, effective and sustainable 2025-2028
- Scottish Labour's Mental health consultation
- Scottish Labour's Preventive health consultation
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland's Clinical governance standards
- Scottish Government's consultation on NHS Delivery
- Scottish Government's Quality Prescribing for Chronic Pain

All of our consultation submissions can be read on the RCGP website [here](#).

Representing our members on external groups & committees

We are well represented across a number of stakeholder led working and advisory groups including:

- Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland (the Scottish Academy)
- AI Scribe Short Life Working Group
- CMO's Senior Medical & Public Health Advisory Forum
- Dementia Strategy Data Delivery Subgroup
- Digital Pathways Dispensing Board (DPDP) Clinical Advisory Board
- Digital Pathways Dispensing Board (DPDP) Programme Board
- Emergency Care Summary (ECS) Programme Board
- GP Editorial Board
- General Practice Workforce Survey SLWG
- GP Career Pathway Development Working Group
- GP IT Strategic Advisory Group
- GP IT Service Management Board
- GP & Public Health Broad Based Training Speciality Training Board
- Health and Social Care Advisory Board Holyrood
- Medical Associate Professions (MAPS) Stakeholder Group
- Medical Education Capacity in Primary Care
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Leadership Board
- National Drugs Mission Oversight Group
- NCD Alliance Scotland
- Our Future Health - Primary Care Working Group
- Primary and Community Health Steering Group
- Primary Care Data and Intelligence Programme Board
- Professional Records and Standards Body Advisory Board (PRSB)

- SARCS Network SLWG - Promoting SARCS Pathways in other healthcare settings
- SARCS Sexual Assault Response Coordination Services
- Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)
- Scottish Joint GP IT Group
- Scottish Mental Health Partnership
- Scottish General Practitioners Committee (SGPC)
- Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network Council (SIGN)
- Stakeholder Advisory Group on Health & Social Care Reform
- Student Mental Health Action Plan (SMHAP) Delivery Group
- Value Based Health & Care Implementation Group

Workforce policy

In March, **Audit Scotland** published its report '[General practice: progress since the 2018 General Medical Services contract.](#)' It found that general practice plays a critical role in Scotland's ambition to improve the population's health, but pressure is increasing because of a growing and ageing population, widening health inequalities, workforce numbers stagnation, and a decrease in both direct spending on general practice as part of the NHS budget, and in real terms. This report was highly critical and a useful tool for the College to hold the Scottish Government to account. Russell Findlay MSP (Leader of the Scottish Conservatives) asked the First Minister about the report in First Minister's Questions.

We remain alive to the anxiety around **GP underemployment** in Scotland, particularly in the central belt, and are regularly discussing the issue with the SGPC. In March Dr Chris Provan met with Dr Matt Bulkeley, Chair of the Lothian Association of Sessional GPs, to discuss the ongoing GP unemployment issue from the frontline. Colin Beattie MSP (SNP, Midlothian North and Musselburgh) raised the issue on our behalf in the Scottish Parliament Health Portfolio Questions, asking the Cabinet Secretary about the financial difficulties facing practices.

In August 2025 the Scottish Government announced **an additional £15 million of recurring investment in general practice** for this financial year which is intended to support workforce retention and recruitment, build service capacity and support the day to day running of GP services. The College welcomed the new money but stated it must mark the beginning of sustained shift of funding towards primary and community care.

August 2025 also saw the release of the **GP Workforce Survey 2025** by NHS Education for Scotland (NES), which found an increase of 4% between 2024-2025 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) GP figures. This marked the first time in several years that the number of WTE GPs in Scotland has increased. While this is a welcome development, the rise follows consecutive declines, and the GP workforce remains smaller than pre-pandemic.

We need to see future workforce survey publications before we can confidently say this is the beginning of a sustained upward trend in GP numbers.

In mid-October the First Minister announced plans to **pilot 15 walk-in primary care clinics**, staffed by GPs and nurses, stating his intention that they would address the 8am appointment rush. As a College, we continue to state that GPs share the frustrations of their patients when they struggle to access appointments, but that policies to improve access must be meaningful, protect continuity of care, and be backed by investment and workforce expansion to increase the capacity of core general practice services. The evidence shows that walk-in services elsewhere have not reduced demand on core GP services or prevented patients from attending A&E.

We were disappointed not to be consulted on the proposal. Since the announcement, we have shared our concerns with the proposal with our key stakeholders. We wrote to the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care to express our concerns, discussed it with the Scottish Government Primary Care Directorate, and in the forum of the Scottish Government Primary and Community Care Steering Group.

We also discussed the announcement at a meeting of the RCGP Scotland GP Registrar and First5 Committee and shared their views in our feedback.

In late October it was announced that BMA Scotland and the Scottish Government had de-escalated their dispute following a **Scottish Government commitment to invest £531 million into general practice over the next three years**. This investment represents a significant boost to core service funding and could help restore general practice to a more sustainable footing. It will mean practices will be better positioned to recruit more GPs, expand their capacity, manage workloads more effectively, and improve patient access and care. The deal also included other commitments that align with some of the College's longstanding asks. We were pleased to see that the College's call for **interface groups in each health board** will be funded by Scottish Government as we have campaigned for improvements to interface working since 2016. This progress will lead to improvements to interface working between primary and secondary care, reducing risk and ultimately improving patient outcomes.

Tackling health inequalities has been a core focus for RCGP Scotland for many years, including supporting the Scottish Deep End Group. It is encouraging to see specific funding allocated to reducing health inequalities as part of the agreement which commits to the continuation of the **Inclusion Health Action in General Practice** project in Glasgow and an assessment of how to realise further support.

It also commits funding to **digital prescribing** - an issue the College has consistently lobbied Government on. We recently published '[A digital foundation for general practice](#)' which called for e-prescribing to be delivered alongside wider improvements to digital infrastructure and systems.

Chair's priority: Promoting the value of a career in general practice

Dr Chris Provan selected the value and opportunity which general practice offers as a career as his policy priority when he took office. We developed a **Chair's Priority Action Plan** in June 2024 which outlines planned policy, public affairs and media activity until November 2026 and this section details activity related to the action plan.

Whole person medical care: the value of the GP

In May we launched our report '**Whole person medical care: the value of the General Practitioner**' as part of our work on the Chair's priority. Scottish Council were instrumental in the formation of this report, participating in a workshop on the topic during November 2024's hybrid Scottish Council meeting. We wrote to key stakeholders to share the paper, including the First Minister, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, all party health spokespeople, SGPC, NES, HIS, the GMC and we look forward to discussing it in forthcoming meetings. We also shared it with the health trade press, on social media, and with members via the Chair's blog.

Influencing Scottish Government's GP Recruitment and Retention Action Plan

At the beginning of December 2024 the Scottish Government published its **GP Recruitment and Retention Action Plan** which sets out 20 measures to act on between 2024-2026, with a commitment to review progress annually, and which addresses some of our long-standing policy calls. We have been working constructively with the Scottish Government to realise this Plan since early 2024, building on our 2022 paper **Retaining the Scottish GP Workforce**.

We continue to closely monitor the delivery of the Plan via regular progress updates. Over this year, we actively fed into the development of the Scottish Government's new **Early Career GP Fellowship Framework** via membership of a short life working group and were pleased to see seven Health Boards bid for funding to establish a scheme in August. The allocation of funding for this programme of work will come in the coming months.

RCGP Scotland sits on the NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Stakeholder GP Retention Project, which was tasked with considering the design of a **new retention scheme**, due to commence new intakes from Summer 2025.

We have met with the Scottish Government multiple times to discuss the issues **with GP Specialty Training and have joined a Working Group on Medical Education Capacity**. These meetings include a tripartite meeting with the Scottish General Practitioners Committee after the joint letter sent to the Cabinet Secretary last year which called for

more time spent in general practice via a **2+1 model**. The Scottish Government also attended the RCGP Scotland First5/GP Registrar Committee meeting, seeking input from GP Registrars and early career GPs from across Scotland on their experience of the value of training placements in hospitals throughout GP training. The representatives provided full and useful feedback, and many advocated for the College call for a move to the 2+1 model for GP training.

We have also offered advice to the Scottish Government team working on the commitment to establish a new, clear, holistic, well-advertised **online career pathway resource for GPs**, linked to learning and development opportunities, with capacity for individual support for GPs requiring career advice. We have fed in RCGP resources to this new website, which is due for completion in Autumn/Winter 2025.

Supporting International Medical Graduates

RCGP Scotland is a member of the Centre for Workforce Supply's **Supporting IMGs in General Practice - Short Life Working Group** which includes representatives from NHS Education for Scotland and the Scottish Government. NES have now coordinated a collection of resources designed to support International Medical Graduate (IMG) GP Speciality Trainees who are approaching CCT and need to secure Visa Sponsorship after they complete their training. To accompany this, NES have also developed a guide to highlight the benefits for GP Practices of becoming a UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) Visa Sponsor. All of these resources are now collected on the TURAS website.

In March 2025, The Scotsman covered our call for a new umbrella sponsorship body to help IMG GPs stay in Scotland and worked with an IMG in the Lothian area who had struggled to find a sponsoring practice to share his story. Following this, we met with the Scottish Government to hear more about their efforts to support IMGs and practices with visa sponsorship, which was an encouraging meeting. We have continued to engage with them on this topic.

In April, Dr Chris Provan and Fiona Murray met with the **RCGP Scottish Faculty IMG Leads** and discussed ongoing issues with Tier2 visas and the cultural differences that IMGs face when living and working in Scotland and to discuss how the College can best advocate for their enhanced support. We have also highlighted the how becoming a visa sponsor is a useful and relatively straight forward task via the Chair's blog.

RCGP Scotland has facilitated meetings between the General Medical Council (GMC) and Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland (MDDUS) to share information on what each organisation is currently doing to support IMGs, including preventing racism. This led to Dr Chris Provan presenting at a webinar in early October 2025 titled **'Thriving Together: IMG Support and Success in Scotland'**, held in collaboration with NES, the GMC, the Centre for Workforce Supply, and MDDUS. This was followed in early November by a strategic stakeholder conference hosted by MDDUS bringing

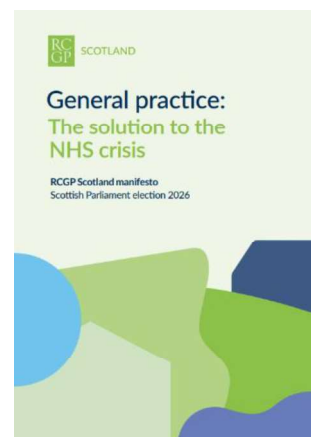
together leaders and stakeholders from across Scottish healthcare to share good practice in supporting IMG doctors throughout their careers, identify systemic gaps and opportunities for improvement, co-create a shared vision for inclusive and sustainable support, and generate actionable outcomes.

In October 2025 we wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care Neil Gray MSP to share our concerns with the **immigration policy options** contained in the UK Government's White Paper. The Cabinet Secretary reiterated his support for IMG GPs and their contribution to the healthcare system and clarified that the Scottish Government does not support the increase to the standard qualifying period for settlement from five years to ten years.

Policy workstreams

RCGP Scotland manifesto for the Scottish Parliament election 2026

With the Scottish Parliament election set for May 2026, we have developed our **RCGP Scotland manifesto 'General practice: The solution to the NHS crisis'**. This process started with a brainstorming session with members of the Executive Committee which identified seven areas that the College might want to focus our asks on. We used these themes as the basis of a consultation survey with Scottish members including members of the Scottish Patient Forum, to gather further feedback and ideas within these topics. The consultation received 50 responses which provided a useful steer on the priorities members hoped to see addressed.



In July we **shared our manifesto with political parties** on a confidential basis and sent out invitations for meetings to discuss. In September, we met with Jackie Baillie MSP, Scottish Labour Health Spokesperson, and the party research team, to set out our seven manifesto calls. In early September we had our quarterly meeting with Neil Gray, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care where we shared our manifesto calls. In November, Dr Provan met with Patrick Harvie MSP of the Scottish Greens. We discussed the manifesto in detail, looking particularly at preventive care, investment, and sustainability.

In September, members of the **RCGP Scotland Patient Forum** also considered this paper, sharing their insights on how we can maximise the patient voice at this important moment in Scottish public affairs.

Our **member e-action** which encourages GPs to share the manifesto with their elected representatives in the Scottish Parliament has resulted in 571 emails sent to MSPs so far, and we will continue to promote the campaign for a while longer.

We have also engaged with some political parties on their own manifesto development in recent months. We have submitted written responses to the Scottish Labour policy

process on the subjects of mental health and on preventive health and attended two of their roundtable events on mental health and on cancer. We have also shared information on dermatology and digital health with the Scottish Conservatives.

Continuity of care

The College is committed to being a leading voice endorsing continuity of care and Chair of Scottish Council, Dr Chris Provan has been collaborating closely with former Chairs of Scottish Council Dr Carey Lunan and Dr Miles Mack to develop thinking on this with regular meetings since October 2024. There has been a renewed and growing interest in continuity of care across a number of key healthcare decision makers.

RCGP Scotland was represented on the **continuity of care subgroup of the Chief Medical Officer's Senior Medical Leadership Advisory Forum**. This sub-group, spearheaded by Dr Miles Mack, met to discuss and develop a paper on the subject, which formed part of the Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) annual report 2024-2025, entitled '[Realistic Medicine - Critical Connections](#)'. This was a significant and welcome advancement in the recognition of relational continuity at senior medical leadership level.

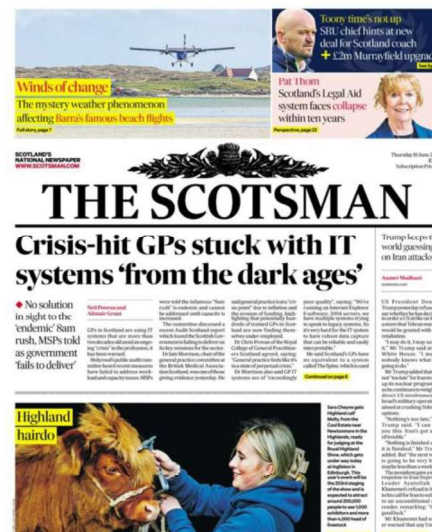
In February 2025, the RCGP Scottish Patient Forum met to discuss continuity of care. Dr Miles Mack joined this session to share a presentation on the evidence around continuity, and the approach his practice had taken to embed it into their systems. Members of the Patient Forum shared their experiences and perceptions of continuity of care, within the context of a pressurised general practice and barriers to access. Many members noted their positive experiences with continuity of care where it had been possible, and others said it would be their preference, but they had not experienced it before.

We have spoken about the benefits of continuity of care during meetings with the primary Care Directorate of the Scottish Government and we plan to hold a roundtable on implementing continuity of care with key advocates, stakeholders, and decision makers in 2026.

IT and digital

Dr Chris Williams leads on our work on IT, digital and data issues and represents the College on a number of different groups and committees as well as co-chairing the Scottish Joint GP IT Group with Dr Chris Black Deputy Chair of SGPC.

In December we learned that the supplier of Vision, Cegedim's British subsidiary In Practice Systems Limited (INPS), was going into voluntary administration. Responding to this news, we issued a quick press release securing coverage on the front page of The Herald, in [Pulse Today](#) and Holyrood Magazine. Chris has been on the Clinical Sub Group of the NSS National Incident Management Team for General Practice IT and continued to monitor developments closely through to resolution.



In October 2025 RCGP Scotland launched the report '[A digital foundation for general practice](#)' which called on the Scottish Government to increase investment in IT and digital solutions in general practice, to implement wide-ranging improvements to how practices operate to boost efficiency and enhance patient experience and to address medico-legal risks arising from the growing use of AI scribes. [Health and care.scot](#) exclusively covered the launch of the paper.

Reducing drug related harms

Reducing drug related harms has been a policy priority for RCGP Scotland for a number of years. We are represented on the Scottish Government's **National Mission on Drug Deaths**.

In this Council year, Dr Chris Williams met with **Public Health Scotland** to discuss implementation of Medication Assisted Treatment Standard 7, which relates to drug treatment in primary care. In December 2024 Dr Williams gave a presentation on GP's understanding of the Medication Assisted Treatment Standards to the National Mission Oversight Group.



The Westminster Scottish Affairs Committee held an inquiry into the Glasgow pilot **Safer Drug Consumption Facility**. Although the Facility had only recently opened at the time of the inquiry, our response was in support of the need for innovation and harm reduction approaches. We also responded to the **Stage One consultation on the Right to Addiction Recovery (Scotland) Bill**,

and following this, in March Dr Chris Williams was then invited to give oral evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee. Dr Williams explained our concern that introducing the right to treatment in the way the Bill describes wasn't the best way to address these issues, and that the Bill disproportionately focussed on rehabilitation services.

In November 2025 the team had the opportunity to visit **The Thistle** which is the UK's first safer drug consumption facility which opened in Glasgow in January 2025. The facility operates daily from 9am to 9pm, 365 days of the year and offers a clean, safe place for people to inject their own drugs - obtained elsewhere, not provided or purchased on site - under clinical supervision and access a wide range of treatment and support. Safer drug consumption facilities (SDCF) have been in operation across the world for decades. Evidence shows these facilities can combat drug-related deaths and improve public health. The visit offered an insight into the trauma-informed approach of the service, which puts dignity at its core, and highlighted several clinical challenges that staff face operating within the legal status of the pilot.

The current project year of the **Certificate in the Management of Problem Drug Use** commenced in November 2024 with Part One of the certificate being delivered to three cohorts; two in-person full-day cohorts, and one cohort online across two half-days. This included an additional cohort on previous years due to high demand for the Certificate. The training was delivered by the project's Clinical Lead, Dr Ewen Stewart, and featured a series of guest speakers including speakers with lived-experience speakers provided via the Scottish Drugs Forum.

A group of approximately 12 people are seated around a long, dark wooden table in a bright room with large, multi-paned windows. They appear to be in a meeting or collaborative work session. Some individuals are looking at laptops, while others are engaged in conversation. The room has a high ceiling and a classic architectural style.

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A lunchtime webinar with guest speaker Prof. Andrew McAuley, from the School of Health and Life Sciences, Glasgow Caledonian University, was hosted in September for both past and present Part Two participants. This session titled '**Cocaine in Scotland: an overview of current trends, harms and responses**', provided an overview of the current epidemiology of cocaine use in Scotland and associated harms, including morbidity and mortality, as well as reviewing the current response to cocaine use in Scotland and what the future might look like.

Reducing alcohol related harms

RCGP Scotland is one of the founding members of **Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP)** and in April we co-signed a letter from SHAAP to the Cabinet Secretary, calling for emergency action on alcohol harms in Scotland.

In 2023 Dr Catriona Morton, then Deputy Chair (Policy) for RCGP Scotland and Fiona Murray Head of RCGP Scotland met with Dr Alastair MacGilchrist Chair of SHAAP and Elinor Jayne Director of SHAAP to discuss collaborating on a project designed to develop educational materials to provide practice teams with the skills to speak to patients about alcohol in order to reduce stigma, **reduce alcohol related harms** and to improve health outcomes. Dr Rachel Phillips was appointed to the role of Clinician Representative in 2024 to lead this work.

We have produced a **webinar which is available for all GP trainees across Scotland to access via the TURAS platform**. It aims to inform them about the current situation regarding alcohol harms in Scotland, prompts them to consider the less obvious harms they will see regularly in general practice (alcohol as a cancer risk factor, for example), provides practical tips on how to have better conversations with patients about alcohol and a promotes a strong, positive message of hope regarding recovery and the crucial role that GPs can play in this. There is also a slightly modified version of the webinar with accompanying narrative notes for facilitators to use for group in-person teaching.

Dr Phillips has also produced a **podcast series with five episodes entitled 'Conversations about Alcohol in Scotland'** with a target audience primarily of GPs and practice nurses, but it will also appeal to the wider primary care team and GP practice staff. The podcast series includes voices from different medical specialties and from the lived experience of someone in recovery. You can subscribe to the podcast [here](#).

In July, Dr Provan authored an **Op-Ed in The Scotsman on the positive impact of Minimum Unit Pricing** in reducing alcohol-related harm. He called for further action and urged parity between alcohol and drug-related harm responses, noting similar annual death rates. The piece was well received by stakeholders.

Climate & sustainability

The **RCGP Scotland Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2024-2026** was approved by Scottish Council in March 2024. It was developed to ensure the continuation of the work in this area to date under the Chair's Priority 2021-2023. Climate and sustainability is now a standing item on the Scottish Council agenda.

We have called for **capital investment in premises**, aligned with the target for NHS Scotland to reach net zero emissions by 2040 and the need to decarbonise the primary care estate in several parliamentary debates including the Health, Sport and Social Care Committee debate on 'Remote and Rural Healthcare' in December 2024. We have also discussed this with the Cabinet Secretary for Health Neil Gray on two occasions. In March 2025, we discussed our call for a General Practice Premises Strategy and the need for alignment with the NHS net zero ambitions. In September 2025, we discussed our manifesto asks including our points on decarbonising premises, sustainable prescribing, and reducing overprescribing and waste.

Drink kills as many people as drugs... here's what to do

♦ Alcohol-related harms should be given parity with Scotland's drug-death crisis, says Dr Chris Provan



It's Alcohol Awareness Week, and as a GP of over 25 years, I've been reflecting on the devastating impact alcohol misuse can have on a person, their family and society. Whether it's losing a patient to cirrhosis, seeing babies born with foetal alcohol syndrome, or family and friends struggling to support their loved ones, alcohol dependence and misuse damages too many lives in Scotland.

Scotland has a deeply problematic relationship with alcohol. We consistently rank among the highest in Europe for alcohol consumption, and data published last month showed more than half of Scots continue to drink above the safe limit of 14 units per week.

While the occasional few drinks can be enjoyable and carry minimal health risks, we need to be honest and accept that too many of us are drinking beyond what can be considered safe.

Alcohol-specific deaths in Scotland have reached a 15-year high, with 1,277 people dying prematurely in 2023 – nearly 25 per cent higher than in 2019, the last full year before Covid hit. There is no doubt the pandemic led to an increase in unhealthy drinking patterns, the effects of which are still being realised.

Some have argued these statistics show minimum unit pricing (MUP) has failed as an intervention. I firmly believe the opposite is true: without MUP, the number of Scots dying from alcohol misuse would be significantly higher.

When MUP was introduced, the aim was to reduce alcohol consumption among those drinking at harmful levels, and to lower overall population consumption. On both counts, MUP has had a discernible positive impact.

Research published in The Lancet demonstrates MUP was associated with a 13.4 per cent reduction in deaths wholly attributable to alcohol. The greatest improvements were seen in the most socioeconomically deprived deciles and among men – groups disproportionately affected by alcohol misuse. At a population level, alcohol sales fell by 3 per cent.

Put simply, an average of 156 alcohol-related deaths have been prevented each year since MUP came into force. Hospitalisations decreased by 41 per cent – a figure not to be lightly dismissed given the pressures facing my colleagues in hospitals.

Wales and the Republic of Ireland have since followed Scotland's lead and introduced their own MUP regimes, and it is disappointing Wes Streeting has opted not to follow suit in England. No one ever claimed MUP would be a panacea, but we must now build on its success and address alcohol-related harms in a broader context.

Tackling alcohol-related harms should be given parity with Scotland's drug death crisis. Given alcohol kills around the same number of Scots as drugs, there should be additional resources, political attention

Dr James Morton in his current role as Vice Chair of SIGN Council, has continued to progress work on **sustainable prescribing in collaboration with SIGN**. The proposed framework for SIGN Council will be known as “trusted voice statements.” It is hoped that these position statements, incorporating the range of expertise on SIGN Council, will be influential throughout the evidence directorate.

A research bid to provide further standards on sustainable care with the **National Institute for Health and Care Research and UK Research and Innovation** was successful. RCGP was awarded a research grant to be a partner within Exeter University's five-year 'Decarbonising Health and Social Care Pathways Hub'. RCGP has agreed to cover the remaining 20% of the research costs. Dr Munro Stewart submitted the application with support from RCGP Scotland in early 2024, and funding was awarded in spring 2025. The project will seek to establish a large-scale, transdisciplinary hub to evaluate the health, economic and environmental benefits of net zero policies and pathways. RCGP will specifically be represented within the workstream designed to co-develop a systems map of the mental healthcare patient journey, with a specific focus on mild/moderate, chronic anxiety and depression in primary care and community settings.

RCGP Scotland has collaborated with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society to produce '**A Manifesto for Health and Climate**' to influence the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections. The manifesto focuses on creating a national movement for sustainable prescribing across Scotland's healthcare system to reduce the environmental impact of medications, building on the long-standing collaboration between the organisations in this area. The manifesto will be launched in the media by the end of 2025, with parliamentary engagement planned for early 2026.

Our thanks go to Dr James Morton and Dr Munro Stewart for their energy and work as Joint Climate and Sustainability Clinician Representatives for RCGP Scotland and who have both stepped down from the role. In September 2025, Dr Katie Hawkins was appointed in the role until March 2026.

Health inequalities

RCGP Scotland continues to provide administrative support and financial oversight of the Scottish Deep End Group. Led by Chair Dr Carey Lunan with support from Academic Leads Dr David Blane and Dr Marianne McCallum, the Deep End Group continues to engage in meaningful round table discussions, steering group meetings, and conversations with the Scottish Government advocating for serving the most vulnerable populations in Scotland.

We met with Carey three times throughout 2025 to discuss continued areas for collaboration and topics such as how to increase the number of training practices and immunisation rates in areas of deprivation, the Service Renewal Framework, Population Health Framework and Primary Care Routemap.

The College featured health inequalities in our manifesto and discussed health inequalities with the Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care when he visited Dr Provan's practice in Aberdeen in February. We also promoted the Deep End report released in February 2025 - [Deep End Report 43 Language and Cultural Health Inequalities at the Deep End](#).

Interface working

The RCGP Scotland Interface Project received confirmation of funding from the Scottish Government to continue for the 2025/26 financial year. Clinical Lead for Interface Groups, Dr Robert Manson continues to support Health Boards with and without **Interface Groups** to develop and learn from one another and he has collated case studies from three Interface Groups and shared this with the Scottish Government, who are currently building a business case for mandating Interface Groups.

RCGP Scotland's '**Gold Standard Model of an Interface Group**' is now available on our [website](#) along with a suite of resources to aid Interface Groups.

Animate Consulting has now delivered **coaching to two Interface Groups** to help develop the direction and professional relationships of groups and we have received positive preliminary feedback from both groups. A third Health Board area is currently taking part in our coaching offer.

The **Primary-Secondary Care Cross-College group** met in January to discuss project progress and the bid for the next three years of the project. As an action from the follow up meeting in May, Dr Robert Manson presented at the Royal College of Anaesthetists Perioperative conference in June on interface issues from a GP perspective. The September meeting focused on the Service Renewal Framework (SRF) and the interface. We were pleased to see the SRF highlighted Interface Groups and improved primary-secondary care working as a way to ensure care is well coordinated and easy to navigate for patients.

In June the project team met with Dr Paul Bowie from NHS Education for Scotland to discuss incorporating a **human factors approach** and testing a new improvement tool for Interface Groups. As an outcome from this meeting Dr Bowie has written a draft principles document exploring primary-secondary interface issues.

In September, we hosted a webinar for Interface Groups, which featured Dr John Ford, Director of the Health Equity Centre, discussing **evidence-based interventions** to address Health Inequalities at the primary-secondary interface.

The Centre for Sustainable Delivery (CfSD) now hosts the Clinical Lead for Interface Working internally and they appointed Dr Stuart Sutton. We were delighted that Stuart will be able to continue the valuable work which he started as RCGP Clinical Lead for Interface Working.

The CfSD has continued to host **webinars on national pathways** aimed at GPs and primary care which provide clinical updates on guidance of new or revised referral pathways. There have been four webinars since December 2024 on pathways including Digital Dermatology, Gastroenterology, Headache, Symptomatic Breast, Scottish Referral Guidelines (SRG) for Suspected Cancer, and Dermatology Pathways and Resources. For more information on upcoming events and access previous webinars, visit the [CfSD Webinar Series page](#).



Dr Robert Manson, Clinical Lead Interface and Dr Stuart Sutton, Clinical Lead, Primary Care Secondary Care Interface, National Centre for Sustainable Delivery (CfSD)

Media activity

RCGP Scotland has provided comment on a variety of topics over this past year, securing a total of 2157 media hits in print and broadcast media.

In December 2024, Dr Chris Provan gave a comment to the **Scottish Daily Mail** regarding the **Scottish Government's likely failure to meet its 2027 GP recruitment goal**. Dr Provan reiterated our workforce and investment calls in coverage of Scottish Labour's general practice commitments, with coverage on **ITV Borders, Pulse, and The Scotsman**.



Scotland's losing hundreds of GPs ... despite SNP's pledge to recruit 800 more by 2027

Health • Scottish National Party • Published 11 Dec 2024

SCOTLAND has lost 222 full-time GPs over the past decade, sparking alarm over patient care.

Doctors warn the devastating numbers are having a 'huge detrimental impact on patients who are facing a struggle to see their GP'.

At the end of March there were 3,453 'whole time equivalent' GPs, a decrease for a third consecutive year, and a fall of six per cent since 2015.

That is despite a pledge by the SNP to recruit five new general practitioners by 2027, a target it is not on track to reach.

Dr Ian Morrison, chair of the British Medical Association's Scottish GP committee, said: "These figures demonstrate the huge challenges facing general practice in trying to meet growing demand without the resources and investment required."

"This is having a huge detrimental impact on patients who are facing a struggle to see their GP now, with the demand continuing to rise as the population continues to age, with more disease and more treatment options than ever."

From 1,630 to 1,260.

Dr Chris Provan, chair of the Royal College of GPs in Scotland, said: "The data released today underpins a widely held view that the NHS is struggling to deliver its core commitment, and we begin to lose sight of the service we provide our patients."

Scotland Labour's health spokesman Jackie Bell said: "This is a staffing shortfall alarm everybody in the NHS is aware of."

"The SNP must work with practices to improve morale and working conditions so GPs don't leave and in turn away from the profession in the first place."

"The Scottish Government said it was currently just over 1,000 GPs in Scotland."

Health Secretary Neil Gray said: "We are working to increase GP numbers by 800 by 2027."

"We are investing an additional £15 million in general practice this year to support GPs in retain and recruit staff, and our work."

Related Stories

- Number of NHS GPs in Scotland drops again
- Number of GPs in Scotland drops again
- GP numbers decline in latest year's figures

Write a comment

Scottish Daily Mail

FOR 25 YEARS

SNP'S LESSON IN INCOMPETENCE

GPs 'should be allowed to perform minor surgery' to cut waiting lists

Ed Halliday

GPs should be empowered to perform minor surgery to help the thousands of Scottish patients who are waiting years for treatment, one of the country's leading family doctors has said.

Despite pledges by SNP ministers to tackle the backlog of patients waiting for care, the latest data shows more than 10,000 Scots have been waiting for at least two years for treatment – 100 times higher than the equivalent figure in England.

Doctors have suggested that GPs could perform more services within local surgeries, removing the need for a hospital referral and cutting down waiting times.

Minor treatments which GPs could perform include cutting out skin lesions and cysts (which includes treating skin lesions with liquid nitrogen), contraceptive coil fittings and joint injections, it has been suggested.

Dr Chris Williams, deputy chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners in Scotland, said the Scottish government's announcement of £116 million in extra funding this financial year for general practice "should allow some practices to offer these services should they choose to do so". Williams said GPs were already dealing with an unprecedented level of pressure "as demographics shift and the number of whole time equivalent GPs decreases year on year", but that they could "undertake a variety of targeted work through enhanced services".

The suggestion comes after The Times revealed that the number of long waits in Scotland far outweighed those south of the border. Nine out of 15 health boards had more patients who had been waiting 104 weeks than the whole of the NHS in England. Critics said the figures were "utterly damning", with the Scottish Conservatives warning the long delays for care were pushing patients towards the private sector.

Dr Simon Farrell, a GP at the Cathcart Street Practice in Ayr, said that patients were frequently "spending their life savings" on private treatment as they could not endure the pain they were experiencing while waiting. "They are using savings they planned for their loved ones or retirement to get knee and hip replacements as their quality of life is so poor," he said.

Off the Scottish patients waiting more than a year for NHS treatment, the highest number – 6,293 – are waiting for orthopaedics, which includes hip and knee replacements. The number of long waits in Scotland far outweighed those south of the border.

How The Times revealed yesterday that the number of long waits for orthopaedics in Scotland far outweighed those south of the border.

been far less productive than NHS England compared with before the pandemic. Hospitals in Scotland delivered 15 per cent fewer elective inpatient admissions between April and June this year compared with October to December 2019. Meanwhile, NHS England's elective admissions between April and June were 9 per cent higher than before the pandemic.

"With funding we could be accessing and treating patients who are stuck on waiting lists to see consultants," Farrell said. However, Williams warned that GPs undertaking such treatments diverted time and resources away from their core work. The number of GPs in Scotland decreased slightly in the year ending March, to the equivalent of 3,453 full-time practitioners.

A Scottish government spokesman said: "We know patients are waiting too long for treatment and we are supporting NHS boards to drive improvements in planned care waiting times. We have already revealed an additional £130 million to drive targeted action at the long end of the list."

Scottish NHS would be rated a disaster elsewhere, Alex Massie, page 29

Following an approach from The Times, Dr Chris Williams gave a comment regarding the possibility of **GPs carrying out minor surgical procedures**.

In January the College responded to a BBC story on the **rise of adults seeking an autism diagnosis from private clinics**, and Dr Williams featured on BBC News Online, BBC Scotland News at 7 and BBC Radio Scotland. Responding to the news

that **Scottish GP IT software supplier INPS had entered administration**, we issued a quick press release securing coverage on the front page of The Herald, in **Pulse Today** and Holyrood Magazine. We also featured in a piece on **unverified health advice** from social media in the Sunday Mail.

Our response to the **First Minister's speech** in January featured in **The Press and Journal, The National, Holyrood Magazine, Pulse Today** and GP Online. Dr Provan featured in STV Grampian's broadcast coverage of the Cabinet Secretary's visit to Aberdeen health services, including his own practice.

In February we gave a comment to **Scotland on Sunday** regarding the number of **GPs taking early retirement**, calling for long-term workforce planning and increased investment. We also featured in The



The Press & Journal YOUR VOICE OF THE NORTH

Aberdeen doctor says under pressure GPs will be 'encouraged' by John Swinney's NHS plan

Dr Chris Provan, GP at Elmbank Medical Practice in Aberdeen, said GPs are under "unprecedented levels of pressure".

by Adele Merson

January 27, 2025, 4:12 pm

Share Comment 1

Aberdeen GP Dr Chris Provan, Scotland chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners. Image: Supplied.

Scotsman coverage of the concerning issue of **locum unemployment** in the Lothian region.

In March Dr Provan appeared on the BBC News at 7 to discuss reports of **GPs struggling with unemployment** in some areas despite growing patient need, which was also featured on the BBC News website and on Good Morning Scotland.

We launched the paper '**Whole person medical care: the value of the General Practitioner**' in May, and we were pleased with coverage in the trade press: [Change course on GPs, says College, RCGP calls for investment to address 'systematic neglect' of general practice](#).

The **Programme for Government commitment** for 100,000 extra appointments received media traction, with our comment featured in The Scottish Daily Mail, The Scottish Sun, [HealthandCare.Scot](#), and Dr Chris Williams spoke on BBC Radio Scotland drivetime.

Our response to **Audit Scotland's report into the 2018 GP contract** gained significant media coverage across eight media outlets, and Dr Chris Provan and Dr Chris Williams appeared on STV News and BBC Radio Scotland respectively. Scottish Council member Dr Sigi Joseph also appeared on the BBC Sunday Show to discuss the workload and workforce crises and call for further direct investment into general practice.



We provided comment in response to **Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill** vote passing, featuring in [The Scotsman](#) and Scottish Daily Mail.

We were also featured in The Scottish Sun and Scottish Daily Mail discouraging people from **buying purported weight loss drugs** from street dealers. Dr Williams was featured in [Holyrood Magazine's](#) piece on the long awaited **NHS Scotland app**.

On Tuesday 26 August, we received significant broadcast, radio, and print coverage in response to the latest **GP Workforce Survey**. Chair Dr Chris Provan featured in a proactive segment on BBC News, filmed at his Aberdeen City practice. The piece highlighted the ongoing workload and workforce crises, including a patient's experience of access challenges. Dr Provan and his practice manager successfully delivered key messages on the urgent need for increased investment in general practice with coverage



on the [BBC News website](#). Dr Provan also appeared on STV News and was quoted in multiple print outlets including [The Times](#), [The Scotsman](#), and [The National](#). Both Dr Chris Williams and Dr Chris Provan also appeared on Good Morning Scotland and Drivetime Radio respectively to discuss the GP Workforce Survey's finding.

On 30 August we had an op-ed published in the Daily Record urging the Scottish Government to invest in general practice, allowing more GPs to be recruited and **ending the 8am rush for appointments**.

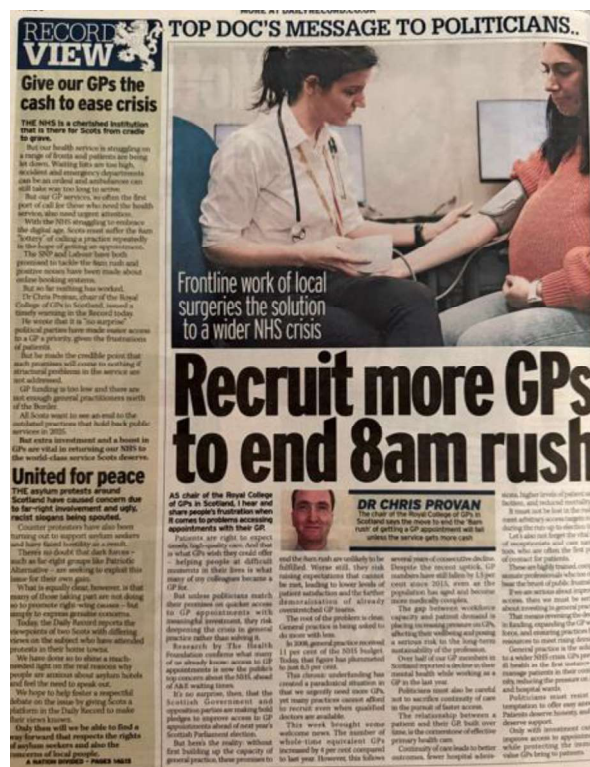
[The Scottish Sun](#) covered our letter to the Public Audit Committee on the **poor condition of some general practice buildings**, focusing on the lack of physical space. The article highlighted efforts to back-scan patient notes to repurpose storage areas into consultation and admin rooms. We provided exclusive data from last year's GP Voice Survey and called on the Scottish Government to deliver capital funding and a comprehensive GP premises strategy.

Dr Chris Provan and Dr Chris Williams gave **evidence to the Public Audit Committee** on Audit Scotland's report on the 2018 GP Contract, which received widespread national print coverage. Outlets including [The Scotsman](#), [Press and Journal](#), [The Herald](#), [Courier](#), [Scottish Daily Express](#), [Daily Record](#), [The I paper](#), [Evening Express \(Aberdeen\)](#), and [Holyrood Today Magazine](#) focused particularly on outdated IT infrastructure hampering general practice.

The College also gained print coverage **urging patients to receive the MMR vaccine** amid rising measles cases in Scotland. Dr Provan's comments appeared in [The Scotsman](#) and [The Scottish Sun](#), and he discussed the issue on BBC Radio Scotland, stressing the need to redouble vaccination efforts.

Following the Scottish Government's announcement of an **additional £15 million recurring investment in general practice**, Dr Provan welcomed the funding in comments covered by trade press outlets [Pulse Today](#) and [HealthAndCare.Scot](#). While supportive, he urged the Government to deliver further investment at pace to expand the workforce.

[The British Journal of General Practice](#) published Dr Provan's **letter to the editor**, highlighting our recent paper '[Whole Person Medical Care: The value of the General Practitioner](#)'. The letter was well received on our social media channels.



In September, we launched the **RCGP Scotland manifesto**, securing front page coverage in The Scotsman. This story used results from the GP Voice Survey 2025, reflecting GPs concerns that they did not have enough time with their patients, to illustrate why political parties must listen to our manifesto asks.



In October we gained significant media coverage responding to the SNP's announcement of **plans to introduce 15 new drop-in centres**, staffed by GPs and district nurses, at their annual conference in Aberdeen. RCGP Scotland Chair Dr Chris Provan featured in [The Telegraph](#), [The Times](#), [STV Online](#), [BBC Online](#), [Daily Record](#), [Edinburgh Evening News](#), [The Herald](#) and the Scottish Daily Mail outlining that it was unclear how this plan could be achieved with the current workforce constraints on Scottish general practice.



Chris Provan also gave interviews to [BBC Scotland](#) and [STV News](#) exploring workload and workforce constraints. Dr Chris Williams gave an interview to BBC Radio Scotland to discuss the proposal and a write up from this interview was featured in [The Sun](#) and it was cited

during a political discussion on BBC One Scotland's Debate Night. Chris Williams was also interviewed by Rona McDougall on [Scotland Tonight](#).



We gained modest coverage with our response to the **announcement from SGPC and Scottish Government that the dispute over funding restoration was ending** with coverage on [BBC News](#), [Pulse Today](#), [GP Online](#) and [health and care.scot](#).

[Health and care.scot](#) exclusively covered the **launch of our digital and IT paper 'A digital foundation for general practice'** which highlighted the urgent need for digital improvements in primary care, planning and regulation for the growing use of AI, and the implementation of the long overdue e-prescribing programme.

The College also gave comments on a range of other issues including **Jess' Rule** to [The Scottish Sun](#), the rollout of the **chicken pox vaccine** ([Dr Chris Williams appeared on BBC Reporting Scotland](#)), [ScotGEM](#) to the [Sunday Post](#), and the new emerging strains of **COVID-19** to [The Courier](#).



Social media

RCGP Scotland maintains active social media accounts as an important way to inform, engage, and communicate with our members. To broaden our reach, this year we created accounts on two new platforms - [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) - adding to our existing accounts on [X](#) and [Facebook](#).

Member comms

We continue to share a **list of ten actions** that RCGP Scotland has undertaken in the last fortnight with members. This is shared in an animated graphic on social media, and in text form in the **Faculty Fortnightly**. The list is a way to showcase to members the breadth of work the College does, covering policy developments, external meetings with key stakeholders, mentions in the Scottish Parliament, representation in the Scottish media, and updates on our projects work.

Faculty Fortnightly
West Scotland Faculty
Member no. 12345
Grade: GP


WEST SCOTLAND
Your Professional Home

What your College has been doing for our members in Scotland

- Launched the sixth episode of the Generally Speaking podcast with guest Professor Lindsey Pope discussing the College's most recent paper Whole Person Medical Care: the Value of the General Practitioner.
- Dr Chris Provan gave a comment on the concerning increase in measles cases and the falling uptake of the MMR vaccine, with coverage in The Scotsman and The Scottish Sun, and he also appeared on BBC Radio Scotland to discuss the issue.
- The West Scotland Faculty held a social event for GP registrars and First5 members at R-CADE Glasgow with a fun evening of arcade games, pizza and networking.
- Dr Chris Provan attended a meeting of MDDUS's expert group on improving doctors' wellbeing to outline the College's views.
- Met with the Scottish Government's Primary Care Directorate to discuss progress made on delivering the Scottish Government's GP Recruitment and Retention Action plan, England's 10 Year Health Plan, and Scotland's Service Renewal Framework.
- Dr Chris Provan attended the Scottish Government's Short Life Working

Dr Chris Provan
 Chair of RCGP Scottish Council


SCOTLAND
Your Professional Home

De-escalation of SGPC dispute and tackling alcohol related harms



Regular readers of this blog may recall that several months ago I expressed little surprise when SGPC entered into a dispute with the Scottish Government.

In the fortnightly **Chair's Blog**, Chris often shares an anecdote from his clinical practice to illustrate the frontline experience behind our policy and public affairs activity. These have included representing GPs at a meeting with the First Minister, highlighting the Scottish referral guidelines for suspected cancer, thoughts on the National Insurance Contribution increases, the GP Workforce Survey, moral harm, and keeping members updated as the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill moves through the Scottish Parliament. We also had a guest blog from Drs Callum George and Dr Cameron Kennedy introducing themselves as Co-Chairs of GP Reg First5 Committee.

Podcast

In August 2024, we launched **Generally Speaking: the RCGP Scotland Podcast** which now has 8 episodes with guests discussing various topics with Chair, Dr Chris Provan.



- Ep. 1 Dr Chris Provan discusses his first six months in the role and what he's learnt about influencing policymakers and securing outcomes for GPs and patients alike.
- Ep. 2 Dr Chris Williams discussing remote and rural general practice.
- Ep. 3 Dr Michael Blackmore discussing the amazing things people can do in recovery from drug use and his energising work in the West of Scotland Faculty.
- Ep. 4 Dr Carey Lunan discussing the drive to improve health equity.
- Ep. 5 Dr Babar Akbar on better support for IMGs.
- Ep. 6 Professor Lindsey Pope discussing the value of GPs.
- Ep. 7 Professor Sonia Aitken, Chair of the Scottish Patient Forum discussing the College's manifesto for the 2026 Scottish Parliament election.
- Ep. 8 Dr Rachel Phillips discusses our upcoming mini-series 'Conversations about Alcohol', a joint project with Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems.

Supporting our members

Mid-career Matters

The RCGP Scotland mid-career leadership support programme funded by the Scottish Government was launched last year as **Mid-Career Matters**. In November 2024 RCGP Scotland hosted the first cohort led by the Clinical Lead Dr Sigi Joseph, comprising of two half-day sessions via MS Teams. Dr Joseph enlisted a facilitator and expert speaker to help deliver the content on topics such as resilience, burnout, and vicarious trauma. The sessions were interactive with all 16 GPs participating in introductions and exercises throughout the sessions. Applications for Cohort Two opened in December and there was a high level of demand, with three times as many applications as available spaces. Places were offered to those GPs deemed to have the greatest need.

Cohort two was delivered online in February, again with greater demand than places. A peer support networking event was held in March which allowed attendees from the first two online cohorts to come together in person where they valued hearing from others facing similar challenges and learning from peers who had made positive changes following participation in the course.

The third cohort was delivered online over two half-day sessions at the end of May/June. Course content was revised to allow more time for introductions and interactive sessions, which encouraged more in-depth discussions and peer networking.

The fourth cohort (the first in-person cohort) was delivered across two half-day sessions at the end of September/October. Although the previous online workshops have been valuable in terms of accessibility for GPs across Scotland, the in-person format gave the opportunity for more peer interaction and allowed participants to share experiences more openly. A total of 20 GPs took part, keeping the group small to encourage interaction and create a supportive environment. A networking lunch was also offered at the end of the second workshop, providing additional space for GPs to build relationships and connect. Cohort five will be delivered online via MS Teams in November over two half-day sessions to 30 GPs across Scotland.

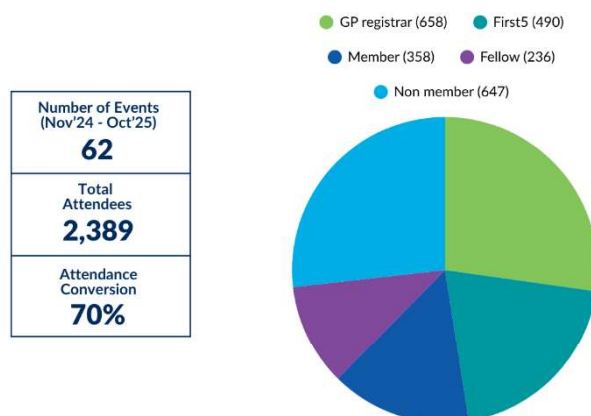
First5 to Partnership: supporting the future leaders of general practice

In April 2025, RCGP Scotland received funding from the Scottish Government as part of their [Recruitment and Retention Action Plan](#) to develop and deliver a small group coaching programme for First5 GPs in recognition that the transition from GP Registrar to First5 GP can feel isolating and challenging. Based on a successful pilot which was delivered by Dr Caryn Simms in West Scotland Faculty, the programme has been scaled up to cover Scotland. Bookings for the first two cohorts opened in late June with all 24 spaces for both online and in-person cohorts being filled within two hours.

The programme launched its first cohort with an in-person workshop held in central Edinburgh in September. The session was facilitated by Clinical Lead Dr Caryn Simms who led discussions on topics including imposter syndrome and time management. The group was intentionally kept small with 12 GPs to create a supportive environment which allowed participants to share their experiences, ask questions and build trust within the group. A WhatsApp group was also created to provide a space for ongoing peer support. The second session took place at the end of October and continued to explore themes and theories to support GPs at the early stages of their career. Cohort two of the programme will be delivered online over three half-day sessions, taking place in November and December 2025. 12 GPs from across Scotland will participate, allowing flexibility for GPs while offering the same learning experience and peer connection.

Learning and engagement events

The RCGP Scotland Membership and Events team continue to deliver a range of events for members and the wider practice team. In this past Council year, they have delivered a mix of 62 in-person, virtual and hybrid and events to over 2389 members across Scotland on a variety of different topics both clinical and non-clinical.



This has been a mix of in-person local **Learn and Connect** events and via online webinars covering topics including joint injections and minor surgery, stress, mental health and addiction, type 2 diabetes, gender dysphoria and transgender healthcare, orthopaedics, personality disorders and forensic pathology.

The in-person clinical training offer has been supplemented with four new regional **CPR and AED** Update sessions in addition to our annual **Joint Injections and Minor Surgery** series which we held in Perth in May and October following increased demand.

We welcomed online updates from Dr Joy Shacklock on RCGP's latest **safeguarding** standards and resources, and Professor Colin Espie who provided a clinical update on his work in the management of **common sleep problems**.

South East Scotland Faculty hosted 3 webinars which were all well received: human factors and decision making, personality disorders and HRT practical prescribing.

West Scotland hosted a webinar for ST3s on prepping for life after CCT.

RCGP partners Wesleyan led a discussion on '**financial fitness for Scottish GPs**' and Lloyds Banking Group offered advice to Scottish GPs 'considering or new to partnership'.

The first **Learn and Connect Conference** took place in **North Scotland Faculty** in August and featured a diverse programme of clinical and professional presentations delivered by a range of speakers. Clinical sessions explored research into the effects of opiate pain relief in pregnancy on babies, examined the growing prevalence of ticks and its health implications, and highlighted the role of rural general practice in pre-hospital emergency response.



North Scotland Faculty's Learn & Connect Conference

Professional sessions focused on RCGP Scotland as a professional home, the positive influence of GPs as social activists, the origins of ScotGEM and updates on RCGP Scotland's ongoing lobbying and policy work on behalf of members across the country.

The atmosphere throughout the day was vibrant and engaging, enhanced by the participation of seven medical students who contributed actively to discussions and learning. Delegates particularly valued the opportunity to connect with fellow GPs, trainees, and students in person, to share experiences through face-to-face learning, and to hear from high-quality speakers. The event also provided valuable networking opportunities, a welcoming venue, and excellent hospitality.

Non-clinical highlights this year have included trauma-informed practice, Out of Hours leadership, sustainable primary care, primary care for asylum seekers, domestic abuse and an opportunity for North East Scotland members to meet College President, Dr Richard Vautrey.

North East and East Scotland's **Later Career and Retired Member** groups have been active this year with a number of local lunches with guest speakers ensuring members stay connected. The RCGP Scotland APEX group also enjoyed their annual luncheon.

Practice staff development opportunities remain in high demand and the team have delivered 10 webinars this year to over 200 attendees, all focused on improving the patient experience within primary care.

The RCGP Scotland **New Members and New Fellows Ceremony** took place in Edinburgh in November 2024 featuring College President Dr Richard Vautrey and ably presented by Dr Chris Provan and Dr Chris Williams. We welcomed 76 MRCGP, 19 FRCGP, 3 International FRCGP (travelling from Brunei Darussalam, Malta and Pakistan to attend), 1 Honorary FRCGP, Professor Colin Espie, and 2 Rose Prize winners, Dr George Freeman and Dr John Howie in addition to over 263 friends and family members plus 26 'mini GPs' (under 3s) to celebrate our members' achievements.



RCGP Scotland's New Members and Fellows Ceremony 2025

65% of those celebrating their MRCGP and FRCGP milestone with us were from a Scottish Faculty. We were delighted to have representatives of all five Scottish Faculties on the day and to be able to direct those attendees to their respective Faculty pages of the RCGP website in our post-ceremony communications.



RCGP Scottish Faculty Provosts, Chairs and College President

The **Faculty Annual Lectures** have been a highlight of this past year offering local members the opportunity to connect with each other, celebrate local success and hear from a variety of high-profile and engaging speakers.



Sandesh Gulhane, MSP delivering the South East Scotland Faculty lecture

South East Scotland Faculty opened the year with their lecture in March 2024 where members heard from Dr Sandesh Gulhane MSP and Scottish Conservative Party Health Spokesperson on his thoughts on the interface between politics and healthcare, the role of general practice within the NHS, and why successive governments have struggled in addressing the 'needs' of primary care and GPs.

First Minister John Swinney MSP joined **East Scotland Faculty** for dinner

before delivering their annual John Lawson Lecture on his experiences and vision for the future of general practice. He outlined the Scottish Government's initiatives on prevention, GP workforce, MDTs, and wider reform. There was also an opportunity for members to pose questions to the First Minister.



First Minister John Swinney joins East Scotland Faculty for dinner



First Minister John Swinney delivering the John Lawson Lecture



Professor Lindsey Pope delivering the Ian Murray Scott Lecture

North East Scotland Faculty's Ian Murray Scott Lecture and Awards Night took place in September with guest Professor Lindsey Pope who delivered her lecture on 'General Practice in 2025: What really is the value?', challenging members to consider the different ways the value of general practice can be recognised and articulated to the public, the profession and policy makers.

The year was rounded off in October by Professor Nitin Gambhir Postgraduate Dean of NHS Education for Scotland, delivering a thought-provoking lecture titled "Belonging, becoming and building the future: GP training in Scotland" to members of **West Scotland Faculty** at their annual Fulton Lecture.



Professor Nitin Gambhir delivering the Fulton Lecture

A series of **Meet and Connect** events aimed specifically at new GPSTs took place across Scotland in August/September, giving our new trainees the opportunity to connect and meet their local faculty where they can get ongoing support throughout their career. There were an additional 5 Meet and Connect events throughout the year.



South East Scotland Burns Night

Other social highlights this year have included the annual South East Scotland **Faculty Burns Night in January**. West Scotland Faculty teamed up again with a local Scout group for an evening of **tomahawk throwing**, archery, fire lighting, and a delicious BBQ with smores. Not to be outdone, East Scotland held an **archery and highland games** event which was well received by local members. North East Scotland Faculty held a **BBQ for IMG GPs**.



West Scotland's BBQ



East Scotland's highland games



West Scotland's tomahawk throwing

Scottish Faculties

Our network of Faculties continues to provide valuable support to nearly 5000 members across Scotland. This year, the team have continued to deliver virtual **Faculty Board and Annual General Meetings** and for the first time since pre-Covid have introduced hybrid meetings allowing members to connect with each other from wherever they are in Scotland.



Members of West Scotland Faculty



Members of South East Scotland Faculty

The Scottish Faculties all held their Annual General Meetings in November 2024 which saw new Faculty Chairs elected in East Scotland (Dr Munro Stewart) and North East Scotland (Dr Douglas Naismith) and we welcome them to their new roles and thank Dr Amy Knighton and Dr Chris Provan for their contributions as outgoing Faculty Chairs. Dr Precious Osadolor and Dr Katie Cathrow have stepped into the Vice Chair roles in West and South East Scotland respectively. Dr Mike Russell is new to West Scotland Faculty and steps into the role of Honorary Treasurer. We welcomed the familiar faces of Dr David Shackles to the role of Provost in East Scotland, Dr Miles Mack as Provost in the North and Dr Chris Provan as Secretary in North East Scotland.

The AGMs also saw ratification of the recent appointment of Faculty International Medical Graduate (IMG) Leads in some of the Scottish faculties. West Scotland confirmed appointment of their Co-Leads - Dr Oyekunle Solomon Oke and Dr Gorkem Hamali, South East Scotland confirmed Dr Jiffry Samsudeen and Dr Umar Abdullahi as their Co-Leads and North East Scotland confirmed Dr Mary-Jennifer Anyika as their IMG Lead.

An induction event for new Faculty Board Officers and Representatives was held online on 19 December followed by a leadership training day for Faculty Chairs at the end of January.

Faculty prizes and awards

The Scottish Faculties have a long tradition of **recognising and celebrating the achievements of local members** and this year have awarded a total of 18 Faculty awards and prizes. This has included awards for trainees and educators, innovation, community engagement and the art of rural general practice. Full details of the prizewinners are included in the individual Faculty Annual Reports.



North East Scotland - Denis Durno prizewinner



South East Scotland - Dr Pat Manson Educators Award winner



East Scotland - Provost Medal winner



West Scotland - Stuart Murray prize winner



West Scotland - joint James Scobbie prize winner



North Scotland - GP Trainee of the Year



West Scotland - joint James Scobbie prize winner



East Scotland - Excellence in 4th yr winner

Fellowship of the Royal College of General Practitioners

This year, 20 members in Scotland will be awarded **Fellowship** of the College. In Scotland, we have 537 Fellows, representing just under 12% of our membership - well above the national average of 6.4%. Full details of members who will receive Fellowship are included in the individual Faculty Annual Reports.

The Provosts in each of the five Scottish faculties have come together to create the **Scottish Provosts Forum** and have met twice. They are now working with the team to host a webinar to promote Fellowship to eligible members across Scotland which will take place in early 2026.

RCGP Annual Conference 2025

This year for the first time, the Annual Conference took place in Newport in Wales. It was a valuable opportunity for our members to learn, reflect, and reconnect with the core purpose of their work as general practitioners.

The Ask the Chairs session gave members the opportunity to hear directly from the Chairs from across the 4 nations and there was some lively discussion.



Ask the Chairs session

Vibrant Faculties 2025

Two Scottish Faculties were shortlisted in this year's Vibrant Faculty (Smaller Faculty) Awards - **North East Scotland's 'hip, knee and joint pain' learning event in Shetland was highly commended** and East Scotland's John Lawson Annual Lecture featuring First Minister John Swinney was a runner up. Faculties were presented with their certificates at the Annual Conference Faculty Session.

RCGP Advocate Summit 2025

The RCGP Advocate Summit took place on 7 May and was an opportunity to bring together our most engaged members. We were delighted that 15 advocates with representation from all 5 Scottish Faculties were able to attend and participate in sessions such as lobbying for change, understanding the RCGP membership offer, decision-making and resilience, chairing online and hybrid meetings, media training, public speaking and a live podcast recording.



North East Scotland receive 'highly commended' at Vibrant Faculties

Our committees and groups

Scottish Council

The AGM of the 71st **Scottish Council** and 1st Meeting of the 72nd Scottish Council took place in Edinburgh in late November 2024. We were joined by Council members and observers and were delighted to welcome College President, Dr Richard Vautrey and Professor Mike Holmes, Chair of Trustee Board. The membership of the 72nd Scottish Council was confirmed, and we welcomed Dr Stuart Shand as a newly elected National Ballot member. We also welcomed our Faculty Representatives and confirmed the list of observers on Scottish Council. With this new membership, we said goodbye to a number of representatives including Dr Alasdair Forbes, Dr Daniel Simpson, Dr Issmael Fergague, Dr Akram Hussain and Dr Amy Knighton - we thanked them all for their contributions over the years. We ratified the election of our officer team comprising of Dr Chris Provan as Chair and Dr Chris Williams as Vice Chair (Policy).

Members heard updates throughout the year on Out of Hours general practice, the Scottish Deep End Group, the Scottish Patient Forum, undergraduate medical education, the work of SIGN Council and climate and sustainability. This year, Council has discussed and debated a variety of Scottish papers including:

- Strong Foundations: Scottish GP premises
- A digital foundation for general practice
- RCGP Scotland 2026 Scottish Parliament Election Manifesto
- Whole person medical care: the value of the General Practitioner
- Chair's Priority: Update on activity June 2024 - June 2025
- Implementing relational continuity of care
- RCGP Scotland Election Campaign Plan

UK paper highlights included:

- Determining the RCGP policy position on a change in the law on assisted dying
- Member motion: regarding the College's support of private GPs
- RCGP Policy statement on the role of the GP in Transgender care
- The workforce crisis: GP unemployment concerns
- Elections 2025 paper including role descriptions
- Preventive Medicine
- Data in General Practice
- Neighbourhood health services (10 year plan)
- The Use of AI in General Practice
- Proposed Changes to the RCGP Governance Documents

Members also approved a new role of Scottish Council Vice Chair - Membership & Education which will open for nominations following the November 2025 meeting of Scottish Council.

Scottish Council's Executive Committee

In May the RCGP Scotland Executive Committee met to discuss some policy areas which are likely to gain traction as we move towards the election campaign period - namely access to GP appointments, and recruitment incentives, particularly when there is a reported mismatch between GP underemployment and vacancies in different parts of Scotland. The Committee also discussed plans for member engagement throughout the year.

GP Registrar and First5 Committee

The Committee welcomed Co-Chairs at the beginning of the year – Dr Callum George and Dr Cameron Kennedy. Discussion topics included:

- GP unemployment concerns
- Audit Scotland report
- 24+12 training
- Joined by Scottish Government colleagues for feedback on GPST hospital placements
- Scottish Government's Service Renewal Framework
- Scottish Government's proposed primary care walk-in centres

At the meeting in October 2025, the Committee elected new co-Chair GP Registrar – Dr Samson Ogunlarin in advance of Dr Callum George demitting his post at the end of 2025.

Scottish Patient Forum

Following successful recruitment to grow the membership of the forum, members met three times within this Council year when they had in-depth discussions on:

- Climate, environment and health – joined by Dr Munro Stewart
- Continuity of care – joined by Dr Miles Mack
- RCGP Scotland Manifesto and Value of GP papers – joined by Dr Chris Provan to provide feedback on both of these documents

GP Recruitment and Retention Advisory Group

The group met twice in 2025 where they heard updates from the represented medical schools, academic general practice and NHS Education for Scotland. Rich discussion topics this year included:

- Scottish Government's Recruitment and Retention Plan
- Shortage of GP Academics
- The model for undergraduate teaching
- 2 + 1 training