Being able to run and lead a society successfully can be an art. Having the right people in the right places, coupled with strong leadership and a clear reason for being can transform and define a society.

This toolkit should teach you how to become a high functioning and effective team, built on collaboration and communication.

Creating a solid committee...

- Get existential - have a reason for being! What does your society want to achieve? How will you portray this during your tenure? Once you have this clear in your minds, you can agree your aims and objectives for the year and get buy in from your committee members early on in your tenure.

- Having a well organised and transparent committee structure with clear roles and responsibilities will ensure role holders understand what is expected of them. The basis of any committee will include:
  - President/Chair - responsible for the overall running of the society; ensuring committee members are fulfilling their roles and that the society is on track with its aims and objectives for the year.
  - Treasurer - responsible for the society’s finances, ensuring that all activity is within budget and reporting on this to relevant parties.
  - Secretary - keeps the committee up-to-date through administrative support such as minute taking and distribution and the managing of social and email accounts.

- Other additional roles that usually evolve include:
  - Events coordinator - coordinates the calendar of events undertaken by the society, working with sub-teams for each individual event.
  - Publicity coordinator - coordinates the distribution of marketing materials to promote events and initiatives undertaken by the society.
  - Sponsorship coordinator - seeks financial support from sponsors in line with student union guidelines.
  - Year/phase representatives - represents the views of their cohort and can contribute and coordinate cohort specific events and initiatives.
  - Academic coordinator - contributes to conversations within the medical school pertaining to primary care teaching and support the events coordinator(s) in providing course related events.
  - Outreach coordinator - coordinates schools outreach programmes and opportunities with the medical school for delivery in the local community.
You may also wish to consider; social coordinator, projects coordinator, fundraising coordinator, rural GP coordinator, RCGP coordinator, ordinary member, outgoing chair, F1 member, research coordinator - however....

Don’t make roles for the sake of it! There is a big difference between active society members and committee members. People want to feel useful; committee members will become disillusioned and disengaged if they feel like they cannot contribute much. Only make committee roles if there is a clearly defined output for the role.

Recruit the right people...

- Generally, the better at recruiting members your society is, the easier it will be to recruit a diverse and dedicated committee.

- Embrace new blood - It can be tempting to keep the same people on your committee every year but new people can bring renewed energy and fresh ideas to a committee.

- Quality control - If your society does not have elections for committee members, students will apply to be a committee member. Create a short application form to gauge what their motivation is, find out what they can contribute and whether these fit with the aims and objectives of the society. You will also want to meet them face-to-face, formally or informally, not just to give them a flavour of the society and the committee, but also just to see if their motivation is true to their application.

Getting organised...

- Plan the year ahead, together - When elections and co-options have taken place, get everyone together to plan for the year ahead. Make it exciting, inspiring and interactive but also useful, inclusive and tangible. You could start the day with a 2-minute elevator pitch per person on what they want the society to achieve that year. By starting with 'blue sky thinking' and distilling these into realistic, concrete takeaways by the end of the session, committee members will feel ownership of the society's output and motivated to achieve. People usually find these “away days” to be a really useful bonding exercise and an excellent way to forge a common purpose (and to have fun!)

- Save and template - Make use of templates provided by RCGP and your student union. By always using the same template, you will create a consistent and understandable way for your committee to digest information as well saving time and effort!

- Sharing is caring - By sharing all your documents in one place and providing access to all committee members, everyone can stay on the ball. Use collaborative resources such as Google Drive and Calendar to work together online and keep everyone up-to-date.

- Handover and succession planning - learn from the past; evolve and grow your society. By providing a clear and concise handover, you are giving the society a head-start on the year ahead. The easier it is to get going, the more opportunity for growth. By looking back, you'll be able to move forward – making your events bigger and better; cultivating pre-existing contacts; becoming a staple society in your medical school and growing your membership as a result. During this period, you will need to reapply to the RCGP Society Partnership Scheme.
Train up! You might be surprised by just how much free training is out there! Often your students’ union and bodies such as the RCGP will offer society training on a variety of useful topics. Go looking for local opportunities and keep an ear to the ground.

Communicating and collaborating...

- Make it easy to share and receive important updates - Create WhatsApp and Facebook groups. The chair and more established members should encourage and enable everyone to add each other on Facebook. Platforms such as Google Calendar also make it easy to place reminders, meetings and events in people’s calendars.

- Don’t forget that it can be difficult as a new member to join a committee of well-established committee members or older students. Be welcoming and make an effort with new members – they could have some amazing ideas and contacts or have plans to chair the committee next year!

- Give everyone a voice - It can be easy for big characters to drown out quieter or more introverted members of the committee.

- Face-to-face - Meet regularly face-to-face on pre-agreed meeting dates and don’t forget that socials can make societies fun to a part of. Not everyone wants to go on a pub crawl; diversify your socials with mini-golf or get a coffee after lectures, and make your society a happy, sociable group to be a part of for everyone. Committee members will be more motivated and bonded by the experience, and will likely bring their friends along to become society and committee members.

- What’s the bottom line? Communication + organisation = buy in, understanding and dedication from your committee members.

Leading a committee...

- Delegate, delegate, delegate. You can’t always do everything yourself. The more that you share and empower others to manage, the better your society will function as a happy, cohesive group.

- Communicating as a leader - People often come to Society Chairs as a point of contact for the society. This can make it really hard to delegate or even to remember who knows what. By keeping open avenues of communication and assuming people need to be informed, you will be able to operate more effectively.

- The golden rules of chairing a meeting:
  - Stick to the agenda - It can be easy for ideas and discussions to spiral off on a tangent at times, but as a chair, you have a responsibility to stick to subject and ensure all agenda items stick to time.
  - Time is of the essence - Usually committee members are busy people doing multiple things for their society. By sticking to time, everything on the agenda will be seen to. Meetings should be within time expected and if people wish to go for a coffee after, they will be welcome to continue conversations.
✓ Be cordial - People have different opinions and ideas and sometimes conversations can become heated. As a leader, you are there to draw consensus in a cordial manner and set an example by treating everyone respectfully.

✓ Call people out but don't talk people down - Sometimes people can act inappropriately without realising. Be the bigger person and politely make this clear. It doesn't have to be a public shaming, just stick to the facts at hand.

✓ Be the diplomat - A good chair can balance conflicting opinions and ideas to strike compromise that suits all parties. When stuck, be a democrat and have your committee vote.

✓ Allow all voices to be heard - There's nothing more alienating than being dismissed.

✓ Draw conclusions - In long meetings, people can forget main conclusions and actions discussed. By succinctly concluding agenda items and discussions, people can see clear next steps and it will be easier for the secretary to follow up.

✓ Make it a fun place to be! Meetings can be dry at times, make sure you schedule breaks, bring some snacks or break up agenda items with short group activities.