



SCOTLAND

Unlocking the potential of general practice

RCGP Scotland 2021

Scottish Parliamentary manifesto

General practice sits at the frontline of the NHS, providing a 24/7 service, carrying out the vast majority of patient contacts and playing a crucial role in alleviating pressure on other parts of the health service. Located at the heart of communities across the length and breadth of Scotland, GPs and their teams play a unique role in providing holistic care to patients, treating the whole person rather than a single condition.

The 2021 Scottish Parliamentary elections come at a critical time for health and social care as we continue to tackle the biggest health crisis that the NHS has ever faced. This context is extremely important as we reflect on how we can rebuild our health service over the coming years to ensure that it better meets the needs of patients.

General practice is poised to play a key role in tackling the significant issues that Scotland will face in a post-pandemic world. We call on the next Scottish Government to commit to the following actions to ensure that general practice is supported to deliver the highest standard of care to patients.



In a post-Coronavirus world, build a sufficient GP workforce to ensure that GPs and the wider multidisciplinary team, can offer a minimum of 15-minute appointments as standard to patients, with an appropriate mix of face-to-face, phone and virtual consultations.

During the response to the Coronavirus pandemic, we have witnessed a significant increase in the use of remote consultations, such as phone and video consultations, alongside face-to-face appointments, within general practice. There is not a one size fits all method of providing care to patients. In order to fully address patients' often complex healthcare needs, we call on the next Scottish Government to implement a credible workforce plan which increases the number of Whole Time Equivalent GPs working in Scotland, which in turn would enable the delivery of 15-minute appointments to patients as standard.



Ensure protected time can be built into the working week of GPs to enable teams to come together to discuss issues, learn from one another and develop as a team.

The workload and workforce challenges currently being experienced within general practice mean that it is often very difficult for GPs to find time within their working week to undertake important activities such as leadership development and training to grow the next generation of doctors. Not only does this impact on the morale of the profession and exacerbate workload pressures, it also reduces the numbers of GPs in leadership roles across Scotland and does not allow for the nurturing of practice teams.

As the multidisciplinary team model of general practice continues to grow, this protected time for development is crucial to enable teams to deliver the highest standard of care to their patients. To rectify this, funded protected learning time should be built into the working week of GPs and this should be reflected in workforce planning for the profession.

To enhance collaboration and effective working across the entire healthcare system, national leadership is required to ensure that every Health Board in Scotland establishes mandatory interface groups to bring together clinicians, senior managers and clinical leaders from across primary and secondary care. These groups must be sufficiently funded to enable all members, including GPs, to actively participate.



Mitigate against worsening health inequalities through supporting the co-location of money advice services within GP practices and the rollout of Community Link Workers to all practices in Scotland, prioritising initially those practices serving populations with the highest levels of deprivation.

The Coronavirus pandemic has shone a spotlight on the devastating impact of health inequalities, with those living in a deprived area twice as likely to die from Coronavirus than those living in the most affluent areas. GP practices are uniquely situated at the heart of communities to help tackle worsening health inequalities and ensure that patients can access the support that they require. We believe that all patients who would benefit from further support in the community should have readily available access to Community Link Workers, with the provision of such support matched to local need. We would also like to see money advice services being brought into GP practices to ensure that patients can access such support in an environment that is known to them and trusted.

Patients who live in a deprived area are more likely to use out-of-hours services. This must be recognised and systems put in place to support both patients and out-of-hours services in managing these presentations to help mitigate against worsening health inequalities.



Improve mental health support for patients through bolstering the numbers of mental health clinicians working in general practice. Support practitioner mental health and wellbeing by safeguarding funding for a dedicated mental health service for those working in health and social care.

Approximately one third of all consultations that take place within general practice have a mental health component. The Coronavirus pandemic has created a crisis in mental health, which is likely to have a long-term, damaging impact on the health of the nation. To ensure that patients can access mental health support as quickly and easily as possible, we need more mental health clinicians working within the general practice team.

Many mental health presentations occur outside of normal working hours so it is vital that mental health services are available 24/7 and have robust links with primary care out-of- hours services.

We welcome the recent launch of the dedicated mental health service for healthcare professionals in Scotland. We know that doctors are less likely than others working in health and social care to access the mental health support that they require due to issues of stigma and confidentiality. We call on the next Scottish Government to continue to support our dedicated healthcare workers, by safeguarding funding for this service to ensure that it can provide assistance to all who require it now and in the future. We also call for ongoing evaluation of the service to ensure that it is fit for purpose and accessible to all who require it within health and social care.



Ensure that GPs and their teams have the IT tools, skills and broadband connectivity required to deliver the highest standard of patient care remotely.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the vast majority of patient consultations have been delivered remotely, over telephone or via video consultations. This has been necessary to reduce the spread of Coronavirus while continuing to deliver high-quality patient care. Throughout the pandemic, GPs have also offered face-to-face appointments when it has been clinically necessary to do so.

Remote consultations are likely to be the norm for some time to come in both in-hours and out-of-hours general practice. To enable GPs to continue to deliver the highest standard of patient care remotely, they must be provided with the necessary tools to do so.

We recognise that remote consulting doesn't work for every patient and we believe that a mix of face-to-face and remote consultations should be the standard for general practice as we move beyond the current pandemic, to ensure that the needs of individual patients are met. All efforts must also be made to help protect against digital exclusion for those patients who struggle with remote consultations.



Revolutionise the clinical and patient experience by urgently implementing digital solutions such as e-prescribing.

The current models of prescribing are disjointed and need to be urgently replaced with a paperless, e-prescribing system through which data can be easily shared between GPs, pharmacy and secondary care teams. This is essential for both in and out-of-hours primary care and as such any developments should encompass 24/7 working.

Implementing e-prescribing would revolutionise the clinical and patient experience, helping to save time and resource as well as ending the use of out-dated and environmentally damaging paper prescriptions.



Take urgent action, underpinned by a clear strategy to ensure that NHS Scotland can achieve its target of net-zero emissions before 2045.

Mitigating the climate crisis in line with Scotland's net-zero carbon strategy offers a great opportunity for reducing inequality and improving the health and wellbeing of the population. We need a concerted effort to tackle the problem of air pollution, with reduced emissions and improved access to safe active-travel options in Scotland, particularly in those areas of higher socio-economic deprivation. We also need the provision and protection of green spaces in communities across the country in recognition of both the environmental and health benefits.

With the health service contributing approximately 4.6% of carbon emissions, we are committed to reducing the environmental impact of delivering general practice. We call for urgent action to be taken which is underpinned by a clear strategy to ensure that NHS Scotland, in line with plans already in place in England, can achieve its target of achieving net-zero emissions before 2045.



Adequately fund general practice to ensure that it can meet the needs of patients now and in the future.

To unlock the full potential of an integrated Health and Social Care system, by the end of the next parliament, general practice must receive at least 11% of the total NHS budget. Adequately resourcing general practice will bring benefits to patients, secure the future of the profession and improve the efficiency of the health service as a whole.

How you can help!

Show your support for our campaign on Twitter by using [#RenewGP](#) and tagging [@RCGPScotland](#)

Want to learn more about our campaign?

Email infoscotland@rcgp.org.uk

The Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland is a network of over 5,000 family doctors working to improve care for patients in Scotland. We work to encourage and maintain the highest standards of general medical practice and acts as the voice of GPs on education, training and clinical standards.

Royal College of General Practitioners (Scotland)

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