Development of a Rural Track GPST Programme

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Background:

The WHO Global Policy document Increasing access to health workers in remote and rural areas through improved retention highlights a range of effective methods of impacting on recruitment and retention including several educational recommendations. In Scotland changes in health policy and service provision have been implemented to try to address recruitment and retention.

Healthcare provision problems in remote and rural areas are well documented and include difficulties with recruitment and retention of GPs. Almost a fifth of Scotland’s population lives in such areas making the issues of particular relevance.

Informed by the WHO recommendations on recruitment, and to develop the opportunities for rural training, in 2012 the Scottish Rural-track GPST Programme was launched to provide broad GP training with specific added rural elements.

Locations:

![Map of Scotland showing rural areas](image)

Outcome:

There has been an annual increase in recruitment to the programme with the reputation and interest having grown through word-of-mouth and successful marketing.

The number of training locations has also grown.

Trainees reasons for choosing the programmes:

- Excellent clinical exposure and increased responsibility
- Community spirit
- Opportunities to develop specialist interest
- Lifestyle, scenery and adventure
- Flexibility of programme posts

Discussion:

This has been an innovative response to improving recruitment to GP training in rural areas. Existing trainees are becoming ambassadors for the programme which will continue to be monitored and evaluated as to whether it helps to address some of the broader recruitment and retention difficulties.

Content:

- Four year programmes
- One year in a Rural General Hospital and eighteen months in GP in that location.
- More specialist competencies are gained through one year in a busier hospital.
- Built in six months of out-of-programme experience allowing trainees to tailor their learning.
- An extensive regional education programme facilitated with the use of video-conferencing technology, and supplemented by specific rural-relevant workshops.
- Enhanced study leave provision which includes BASICs qualification.

The programme aims not only to provide the competencies described for GPST in the RCGP’s curriculum, but also the competencies to work in rural or remote practice.

The experience in our RGHs is ideally suited to GPST. Experience is general and undifferentiated; there is no super-specialisation with GPSTs handling everything from major trauma to minor self-limiting problems, always with the possibility of considering emergency retrieval to bigger centres. The support is hand-on from consultants with no middle grades and the experience for GPST is consistently very highly rated in local and national surveys. Our RGHs are recognised as treasured educational resources.

1. [http://www.who.int/hrh/retention/guidelines/en/](http://www.who.int/hrh/retention/guidelines/en/)

This resource can be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on 0131 656 3200 or email altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk to discuss how we can best meet your requirements.

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