

January 2016

# Vibrant Faculties

A guide for building a thriving Faculty



Royal College of  
General Practitioners

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# Foreword

College CEO Neil Hunt (left) talking with President Dr Terry Kemple

The Royal College of General Practitioners has 32 Faculties across the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. It also has a Faculty for overseas members. The Faculties have played a central role in delivering excellent services to members ever since the College was founded in 1952, advancing the organisation's mission to promote the highest standards in general practice – by delivering much-valued education and networking events at the local level.

The Faculties vary hugely in size. At the beginning of 2016, Midland Faculty was the largest with 4,041 members, and North Wales Faculty was the smallest with 345 members. In recent years, different Faculties have started to forge ahead and innovate in different areas – such as running expansive education programmes, setting up mentoring schemes to support local GPs, and engaging with politicians on behalf of local members.

Since the summer of 2014:

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

During the same period:

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

In addition:

- Wessex Faculty has built up a proactive Twitter account, through which its education and networking events are promoted to local members

- Humber and the Ridings Faculty has acted as a local voice of general practice, through their Chair Dr Mike Holmes having given a range of local BBC radio interviews, and
- Sheffield Faculty has abandoned usual protocol and run a regular Faculty Board meeting without the usual agenda – and as a result substantially increased the number of GPs attending its regular meetings going forward.

In the face of the unprecedented resourcing crisis in general practice, it is crucial that the College offers the best possible services to its members and ensures that all of them have an excellent experience of membership, wherever they live or practice.

The Faculties are increasingly at the forefront of what the College provides for the nation's GPs, and as the Faculties increasingly innovate and work together in the spirit of 'One College', they are also sharing new ideas and best practice more than ever before. This is primarily being done through the annual Faculty innovation workshops, held across the UK each spring, and the Faculty sessions at the College's annual conference. We hope this guide will take that sharing of new thinking a step further.

There are examples of innovation taking place across the Faculty network and there will inevitably be some excellent instances of best practice in providing excellent member services that we have not been able to capture in this publication.

However, we hope that by sharing much of the latest thinking and best practice that exists – we can enable each Board to learn what innovative approaches are being adopted elsewhere and let them decide whether or not they want to adopt some of the ideas being used by others.

If you have any examples of innovative best practice not captured in this document please tell us about it by emailing Faculties Coordinator Claire Poupard at [claire.poupard@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:claire.poupard@rcgp.org.uk) and we will consider it for use in the updated online version of the guide that will be hosted on the College website.

RCGP President Dr **Terry Kemple**, and RCGP Chief Executive **Neil Hunt**

## RCGP UK and Republic of Ireland Faculties

### Central and East of England Faculty regions (6)

- Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Faculty – 1,176 members\*
- East Anglia Faculty – 1,760 members
- Essex Faculty – 1,122 members
- Leicester Faculty – 819 members
- Midland Faculty – 4,041 members
- Vale of Trent Faculty – 1,560 members

### London and South England Faculty region (7)

- North and West London Faculty – 2,014 members
- North East London Faculty – 1,796 members
- South East Thames Faculty – 2,007 members
- South London Faculty – 1,937 members
- South West Thames Faculty – 2,129 members
- Thames Valley Faculty – 2,090 members
- Wessex Faculty – 2,425 members

### North England Faculty region (7)

- Cumbria Faculty – 386 members
- Humber and the Ridings Faculty – 441 members
- Mersey Faculty – 2,096 members
- North East England Faculty – 1,829 members
- North West England Faculty – 3,136 members
- Sheffield Faculty – 1,158 members
- Yorkshire Faculty – 2,286 members

### Northern Ireland (1)

- Northern Ireland Devolved Council / Faculty – 1,364 members

### Scotland Faculty region (5)

- South East Scotland Faculty – 1,179 members
- West Scotland Faculty – 2,224 members
- East Scotland Faculty – 572 members
- North East Scotland Faculty – 657 members
- North Scotland Faculty – 355 members

### Wales and South West Wales Faculty region (6)

- South East Wales Faculty – 1,092 members
- South West Wales Faculty – 563 members
- North Wales Faculty – 345 members
- Tamar Faculty – 1,319 members
- Severn Faculty – 1,835 members
- Republic of Ireland Faculty – 640 members

\* The membership figures referred to in this document were correct at 1 October 2015



## Supporting members through education and networking events

“The Faculties have improved quality in their local areas by providing education and networking events.”

The College’s Faculties have improved the quality of general practice in their local areas throughout their existence, by delivering comprehensive programmes of high-quality education and networking events. Sixty-four years after the inception of the College, it is clear that, through an effective education and networking programme, a Faculty can provide education for the equivalent of up to half of its membership, or more, each year – thereby providing local members with excellent value for money and playing a key role in improving the quality of general practice in the locale.

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

- Midland Faculty, with 48 events, attended by 1,989 delegates, compared with 4,041 members (as of 1 October 2015)
- Mersey Faculty, with 45 events, attended by 1,353 delegates, compared with 2,096 members
- Wessex Faculty, with 36 events, attended by 1,026 delegates, compared with 2,425 members
- South London Faculty, with 29 events attended by 1,021 delegates, compared with 1,937 members

- North and West London Faculty, with 37 events, attended by 947 delegates, compared with 2,014 members
- North East England Faculty, with 23 events, attended by 764 delegates, compared with 1,829 members
- North West England Faculty, with 27 events, attended by 757 delegates, compared with 3,136 members
- Severn Faculty, with 12 events, attended by 721 delegates, compared with 1,835 members
- Vale of Trent Faculty, with 26 events, attended by 718 delegates, compared with 1,560 members, and
- East Scotland Faculty, with 24 events, attended by 707 delegates, compared with 572 members.

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

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

In total, between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, more than 15,600 delegates attended 529 Faculty education and networking events across the UK. Many Faculties are working hard to expand their programmes of education and networking events. Over the past six years, for example, North East England Faculty has increased its offering to local members from between five and eight events per year to an annual figure of more than 20 – a total which is still increasing. This is thanks largely to having a paid Education Lead Director, who has been able to drive the development of the programme. With the Faculty having recently appointed an Events Administrator it will be able to run even more courses in the future. The Faculty’s education programme is a varied one, and it caters for GPs at all stages of their career – the trainee element of which is a collaboration with the Northern Deanery. It provides a varied programme including inspirational professional support offerings, as well as a dedicated core of

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

CPD courses.

Wessex Faculty provides additional support within its MRCGP training programme, by offering a series of CSA preparation DVDs and case cards to assist registrars in developing their consultation skills. Other courses are chosen and run based on which ones prove to be the most popular, whether due to new developments in a particular area or to meet specific needs. Feedback is always requested, primarily online, which further aids the selection and refining process, as well as ensuring high quality levels are maintained and a continuous cycle of improvement. During the period between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, the most popular education and networking events run by the Faculties were:

- GP trainers’ conference, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 154 delegates
- GP Excellence Awards and Michael Lennard Reception, run by Severn Faculty, attended by 150 delegates
- Careers Fair, run by Severn Faculty, attended by 140 delegates
- Nottingham GP refresher course, a partnership event in March 2015, run by Vale of Trent Faculty, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust and Nottingham City Hospital Postgraduate Education Centre, attended by 137 delegates

- ST3 Leavers’ Conference, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 133 delegates
- Nottingham GP refresher course, a partnership event in October 2014, run by Vale of Trent Faculty, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust and Nottingham City Hospital Postgraduate Education Centre, attended by 119 delegates
- AKT, run by Wessex Faculty, attended by 114 delegates
- Annual Symposium, run by East Anglia Faculty, attended by 114 delegates
- Menopause and HRT, run by North East England Faculty, attended by 109 delegates
- Careers’ Fair, run by North East England Faculty, attended by 104 delegates
- Sporting Injuries, run by Mersey Faculty, attended by 104 delegates
- ST1 Starters’ Conference, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 104 delegates
- GP Hot Topics, run by Mersey Faculty, attended by 103 delegates
- GP Update event, run by Humber and the Ridings Faculty, attended by 100 delegates
- Gala Dinner and Gale Lecture, run by Severn Faculty, attended by 95 delegates
- Annual Meeting and Awards Evening, run by Mersey Faculty, attended by 92 delegates
- Annual Symposium, run by Thames Valley Faculty, attended by 92 delegates
- Safeguarding the Future City Health Conference, run by RCGP London, attended by 92 delegates
- Summer Ball, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 91 delegates, and
- Research Conference, run by Midland Faculty, attended by 88 delegates.

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



The EASE paediatric event, in March 2015, was attended by 63 delegates; the EASE vascular event, in September 2014, was attended by 40 delegates; and EASE management of headache related conditions in primary care, in December 2014, was attended by 44 delegates. The EASE events are aimed particularly at AITs and First5s and are free to attend, which creates a real sense of positivity among participants. The events are well-attended and combine an education update on an issue that is topical in their local area with a networking opportunity. Each Faculty has an EASE lead who decides upon the topic of each event, finds the speaker and is often able to source a free venue. At the EASE events, the London Faculties occasionally set up a helpdesk to encourage participants to engage with their local Faculty or even to take up College membership, if they are not currently members. The EASE events were created to meet the needs of AITs and First 5s by the three London Faculties who collaboratively bid for funding support from the College's Membership team. As a result of the way they are organised, the administration and management of the events has been shared across the three Faculty /Events Administrators, and despite the courses running monthly, each Administrator only need carry out administration duties on a quarterly basis. As seen with the EASE evenings, free education and networking events are

increasingly seen by many GPs and trainee doctors as a key member benefit. Towards the end of 2015, a number of Faculties delivered free education, networking and developmental events by working in partnership with the College's Clinical Innovation and Research Centre (CIRC). In November, West Scotland, Sheffield and Vale of Trent Faculties all held free events for local members on patient safety, and, in December, South East Wales Faculty held a free event on eye health. A further 30 free events are set to be held in the first half of 2016 by a number of Faculties, in partnership with CIRC. With the increasing popularity of online learning, some Faculties are increasingly considering the use of webinars. For instance, Wessex Faculty has recently launched a new webinar programme. Currently, the number of participants per session is limited to 20. However, the initial events have proved extremely popular among members. Some Faculties are increasingly running non-clinical events that support the broader general practice team. For instance, Thames Valley Faculty recently ran an event to help members prepare for CQC inspections. This was oversubscribed and demonstrated a responsiveness to current challenges in general practice, outside of the day-to-day clinical tasks and duties. Thames Valley also hold an annual residential management course, in partnership with the local CCG. Last year, there were 62 attendees.

## Hints and tips:

- Consider what would be the ideal size and content for your education and networking programme – in order to be of maximum benefit for local members.
- Consider having a paid Education Lead/Education Director to drive the development of your education programme – and set clear objectives as to what you want the post-holder to achieve.
- Consider choosing courses that have already proven popular elsewhere across the Faculty network, such as those mentioned above, or think about talking to the Education Leads at the Faculties running the most extensive education and networking programmes.
- Consider running Education and Social Evening (EASE) events.
- Consider running events for the wider general practice workforce, such as those for Practice Nurses or Practice Managers.
- Consider selecting courses that you know will be popular with GPs locally.
- Consider delivering education via webinars, such as Wessex Faculty.
- Explore ways to run more free events for members – as this will be seen as substantially adding value.
- Ensure you use the Faculty Quality Assurance checklist, which can be supplied by your Regional Engagement Manager.
- Ensure that as part of the quality assurance process, you analyse your course feedback. This will ensure that you can reflect on what delegates have said and assist you to make the course even better the next time around.
- Consider your Faculty's stance on sponsorship: on the one hand accepting sponsorship may entail receiving financial support from organisations that members of your Board may dislike, on the other hand accepting sponsorship may allow you to run a wider and more comprehensive education programme for the benefit of local GPs. (For further information see RCGP guidelines on accepting advertising or sponsorship, which you can obtain via your Regional Engagement Manager or Faculty Administrator.)

## Helping members through mentoring schemes

There are seven mentoring schemes currently being run across the Faculties. They are administered by Faculty staff, and depending on interest and demand from members, some schemes have up to 30 active relationships, while others have much smaller numbers. Some of the schemes concentrate on promoting resilience – and given ballooning workloads, and other increasing challenges for those working in general practice, such programmes are generating a great deal of interest among members. The mentoring scheme run by the Midland Faculty helps doctors experiencing a variety of personal, professional and academic difficulties. The programme started in 2008, and has received financial support from both Health Education West Midlands and Worcester SHA. In total, 124 GPs and 49 dentists / consultants have benefited from the programme – which offers five one-to-one sessions with an experienced professional colleague. All of those GPs who have been supported through the scheme have given positive feedback, with many commenting on how it has helped them to have a more positive view of their

future in general practice. Tamar Faculty has just started its own resilience scheme for newly qualified GPs in order to develop and equip them with the skills needed to survive and thrive in general practice. The programme – which is being administered with the support of Severn Faculty – is being initially funded for two years by Health Education South West. To promote the scheme, Health Education South West is circulating an email to all qualifying GPs to inform them about the programme. In order to meet the demand from local members for more help with coping with the challenges of modern general practice, a number of Faculties are now also starting to run resilience courses. Vale of Trent held a half-day resilience workshop on one Saturday in September, which had excellent feedback. The Faculty hopes to hold another two resilience workshops in 2016, one in partnership with Sheffield Faculty, and one as a joint Central England Faculties event. South East Thames is due to run a resilience workshop in January 2016, with the University of Westminster, which is scheduled to be free to members. Meanwhile, Wessex Faculty is also due to

run a resilience event in January 2016. However, not all mentoring schemes focus on resilience. Severn Faculty has been running a mentoring scheme since 2010 which aims to provide confidential mentoring support to newly qualified GPs. The programme was an initiative developed by a group of local GPs who originally received joint funding from the Severn School of Primary Care, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and the Faculty itself. The scheme has so far matched 40 mentors to mentees. It is anticipated that the relationship will last for up to two years, depending on particular circumstances. The first meeting is face to face at a mutually agreed, preferably neutral, venue but afterwards the mentor and mentee may choose to have email or telephone contact as well as, or instead of, face to face meetings. Mentors in the scheme are supported through training and feedback and receive a small bursary in recognition of their contribution. The scheme is open to GPs within the first two years following qualification. It aims to help them with the transition from vocational training schemes to working in independent practices, and is open to anyone beginning work in Severn, regardless of where they trained. Other Faculty mentoring schemes are currently run by North Scotland, South East Scotland and a partnership of the three Welsh Faculties (South East Wales, South West Wales and North Wales).

## Hints and tips:

- Identify a member of your Board who might be interested in mentoring, perhaps they have been part of a successful mentor / mentee relationship.
- Consider carefully the purpose of the scheme – is it to provide resilience for struggling GPs or will it be aimed at those who are newly qualified?
- Explore opportunities for funding to enable the Faculty to train the mentors, empowering them with the skills and knowledge to be comfortable in the role.
- If you are able to secure external funding, you could perhaps make a small bursary available to all participating mentors, in recognition of their contribution.





Welsh Health Minister Mark Drakeford

## Engaging with politicians

As the College tries to shape the healthcare policy agenda in order to secure more resources, and a bigger workforce, for general practice, it engages with both Westminster politicians and those in the devolved legislatures. This engagement has traditionally come through College HQ or the three Devolved Councils. However, as all parts of the College have been working together in the spirit of 'One College' working to support the organisation's campaign for more resources, *Put patients first: Back general practice*, there is a greater appetite among the Faculties to engage with politicians in order to allow ordinary GPs to explain to decision makers what the pressures are in the profession. One Faculty in particular – South East Wales – is leading the way on this agenda. During 2015, it invited both the Welsh Health Minister Mark Drakeford and the Chief Medical Officer for Wales Dr Ruth Hussey to Faculty meetings, attracting 50 attendees on both occasions. When Mark Drakeford attended the

Faculty in June, his speech was well received, however the strain GPs are under was evident from the questions asked, emphasising the pressures general practice is facing. Subsequent to the successful South East Wales Faculty meeting, the North Wales Faculty invited Mark Drakeford – along with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Chief Executive Simon Dean – to address a meeting in December, which was attended by almost 30 members. In March 2015, South East Wales Faculty invited Dr Hussey to a dinner with members and non-members. Dr Hussey discussed cluster development in primary care with up to 50 attendees. Faculties are encouraged to engage with local politicians – either through inviting them to Faculty meetings or by setting up visits to practices, so that politicians can see what everyday general practice is like. Where an engagement has been successfully secured, Faculties are encouraged to discuss the matter in advance with the College's Policy and Campaigns team. To discuss how best to make use of the opportunity, contact Assistant Director of Policy and Campaigns Mark Thomas at

mark.thomas@rcgp.org.uk. Faculties can also access information and resources on practice visits on the *Put patients first: Back general practice* campaign microsite at [rcgp.org.uk/campaign](http://rcgp.org.uk/campaign).

### Hints and tips:

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

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

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

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

Dr Hynes, firstly drew the graphic, wrote the poem and then recorded it in video format on his mobile phone. Having seen the video win first prize in the competition, Faculty Chair Dr Jonathan Leach then approached Dr Hynes to see if he would be interested in re-recording it using professional equipment and utilising the input of a graphic designer. The video that can be accessed on YouTube is the re-recorded version, and it has won plaudits from GPs across the UK. The video has been featured on the College website's homepage and is hosted on the College's YouTube channel. Meanwhile, North of Scotland Faculty member Dr David Hogg has also successfully used video – but in his case as a recruitment tool to attract GPs to the Isle of Arran, where he works. Dr Hogg has produced two videos in this vein. His first video shows the excitement of the role of a remote and rural GP on Arran through a short film made in the style of a James Bond movie. The video was uploaded on YouTube in December 2012, and so far has had almost 14,000 views. The video was aimed at recruiting a salaried GP to the Arran Medical Group and the position was successfully filled.

## Promoting messages via YouTube



Dr Hogg launched a similar video for the Arran Medical Group in June 2015. This second film had an A-Team theme, and the video has so far received over 3,000 views and resulted in some press & TV coverage too. Both videos generated a great deal of interest. It is thought that it stimulated interest in some other lines of work too – such as teaching and the police. Social media was an important part of maximising publicity.

To view the Midland Faculty video go to:

- [youtube.com/watch?v=Xm4nJB6sSnA](http://youtube.com/watch?v=Xm4nJB6sSnA)

To view the James Bond-style Arran recruitment video go to:

- [youtube.com/watch?v=YuUIKwxPtXU](http://youtube.com/watch?v=YuUIKwxPtXU)

To view the A-Team-style Arran recruitment video go to:

- [youtube.com/watch?v=evS8J-KxEEg](http://youtube.com/watch?v=evS8J-KxEEg)

### Hints and tips:

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

#TeamGP

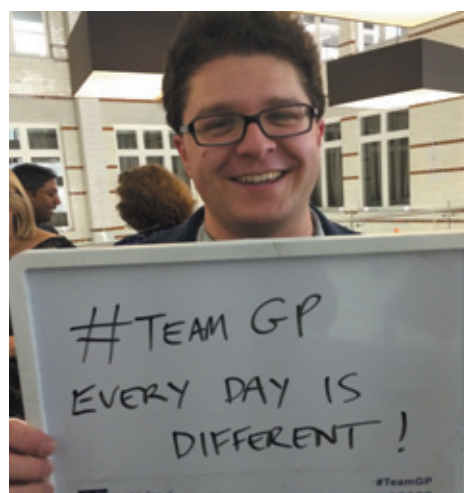


## Using social media

In recent years, many Faculties have started to engage with their members via social media.

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

Eileen Gorrod, were part of the panel at the Faculty fringe session at the College annual conference 2015 in Glasgow, where they spoke passionately about engaging with members through social media, how social media supports Faculty activity and how our Faculties need to identify the most effective channels through which to communicate with the new generation of local members coming through. Midland Faculty has a main Twitter account which can be found @MidRCPG. At the time of writing this account had over 220 followers and is administered by three members of the Faculty board, Dr Duncan Shrewsbury, Dr Sabena Jameel and Dr John Cosgrove. The account regularly tweets on subjects such as recruitment, Faculty events, workforce stability and press stories relating to general practice.



There is another account for First5s, @RCGPFIRST5Mid, which has over 100 followers and is administered by the Midland's First5 lead, Dr Dilsher Singh and tweets about Faculty events and, current press stories relating to general practice.

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

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

## Hints and tips:

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

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## Giving TV and radio interviews

Over the last two years, the College has generated a record amount of media coverage across the UK – securing nine national newspaper front page splashes and the highest media profile in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in living memory. As the College increasingly uses the media to get across its key messages – such as the need for more resources for general practice, and a bigger workforce – an increasing number of Faculties are communicating key messages on behalf of general practice to local and regional audiences via television and radio. In order to provide support to those Faculties who want to engage via local and regional broadcast media, College HQ provided media training just over a year ago for 29 Faculty Board representatives. The training was highly rated by the participants and gave them the confidence to go on and do a number of high profile interviews. One of the attendees, Midland Faculty Board Chair Dr Jonathan Leach, gave 15 media interviews to the BBC in 2015. This included a day when he spoke to nine

local BBC radio stations as well as Sky TV about a story on antibiotic resistance. Since the training, Dr Cathy Sloan, Provost for South East Wales Faculty and Dr Rebecca Payne, South East Wales Faculty Board member and RCGP Wales Chair have regularly appeared on local and national media to debate issues relating to general practice. Chair of Humber and the Ridings Faculty Dr Mike Holmes has also spoken a number of times with the BBC, including with Radio London, Radio Stoke, Radio Coventry and BBC Radio Warwickshire about clinical pharmacists working in GP practices, and to BBC Cambridge and BBC York regarding funding cuts affecting GP practices in rural areas. North West England Faculty member Dr Farrah Sheikh has done numerous live TV interviews with BBC1 Breakfast News. She has also done five radio interviews and interviews with the BBC website. Meanwhile, East Anglia Faculty Board member Dr Matthew Piccaver has appeared on Radio 5 Live, and also written a number of articles for newspapers, including the Independent and local publications.

## Hints and tips:

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



## Promoting general practice through engaging with GP societies

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

**T**hrough its *Put patients first: Back general practice* campaign, the College has helped to persuade all four UK governments to take steps to expand the GP workforce.

While ministerial pledges are very welcome, the workforce will only grow if more medical students and trainee doctors come to consider a career as a family doctor.

The College is promoting general practice as a career at UK and devolved nation level, but a number of Faculties are also trying to make a difference at the local level by establishing partnerships with GP societies at nearby universities – or

even setting them up from scratch. GP societies promote general practice to medical students and provide networking opportunities for those at university who would like to pursue a career as a family doctor.

Supporting a GP society will enhance the reputation of the Faculty concerned, with the medical students and trainee doctors at the university and may well lead to some of them becoming involved with the Faculty in later years.

One particularly successful GP society was set up last autumn at Cardiff University by the South East Wales Faculty. After just one year in existence, it has around 170 members.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Recruitment is on all our agendas and we are missing a trick if we don’t engage with potential GPs early on.”

rewarding career option.

The only one of its kind in Wales, the Cardiff University GP Society is now working with Swansea University to support them in setting up a GP society of their own and would like to inspire other Faculties to consider taking a similar route.

“Obviously recruitment is on all of our agendas and we are missing a trick if we don’t engage with potential GPs early on,” says Hannah.

President of the Cardiff University GP Society is Nicole Abel, who is in her fifth year.

“Undergraduates don’t have much exposure to general practice and are unaware of the breadth and diversity of it, such as Out of Hours and GPs with a Special Interest,” she says. “The society is a fantastic platform to showcase what general practice is about – particularly to show that you can be a generalist while still having specialist interests.”

Meanwhile, another Faculty that engages closely with medical students is the Vale of Trent, which has been supporting medical students for years – partly as a result of the fact that the Faculty is based in the Division of Primary Care at the University of Nottingham.

The GP Society President is annually invited to become a co-opted member of the Vale of Trent Faculty Board and asked to speak at the AGM.

The Faculty Board provides financial and speaker support for GP society meetings, encourages initiatives such as the Society’s sign language course for practice staff, attends medical student careers fairs and also opens up opportunities for students

to attend local and national RCGP meetings.

The Faculty Board is currently working with the GP Society on a joint special meeting in the spring of 2016, which is to be addressed by College Chair Professor Maureen Baker, who will discuss patient safety.

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

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

## Hints and tips:

- Consider setting up a GP society at the university in your locale if there isn’t one there already.
- If you are working with students to set up a GP society from scratch, consider following the model of the one set up by the South East Wales Faculty. For further guidance about setting up a new GP society or engaging more closely with medical students, contact College Vice Chair and South East Wales Faculty Board member Professor Kamila Hawthorne at kamila.hawthorne@rcgp.org.uk.
- If there is a GP society at your local university already, consider establishing links with the medical students so that you can give them support and guidance, and therefore ultimately help more students into general practice.

As the College attempts to promote general practice in all four nations of the UK, the Faculties played a key role during 2015 in the task of engaging directly with foundation doctors and medical students both in England and Scotland to highlight the benefits of a career in general practice as a family doctor.

Over the course of two rounds of promotional events, the Faculties in England – in partnership with Health Education England – helped to run a combined 37 events, which were attended by an aggregate of around 1,150 foundation year doctors and students.

The first tranche of events, which was held between January and March, attracted up to 400 young doctors – with attendees listening to inspirational talks on why a career in general practice can be one of the most rewarding in medicine. A total of sixteen events were held in locations including Leeds, London and Nottingham and were extremely popular, attracting dozens of foundation doctors and medical students.

The second tranche of events was held between September and November, with the 21 events engaging with over 750 trainee doctors and medical students.

Both roadshows were staged as part of a broader recruitment drive to boost the number of medical graduates opting for family medicine under the 10-point plan to boost the GP workforce, jointly being run by the RCGP, NHS England, Health Education England and the BMA.

Those attending the events were positive in their feedback. One attendee at an event held as part of the first roadshow said: "Comprehensive and useful for finding out how to become a GP and why it is a great career choice."

Another attendee at the earlier events said: "Very enjoyable. The event has made me consider a future career in general practice. As a mature student, it was helpful to talk to current GP trainees about balancing life as a GP with other commitments."

A third young doctor said: "Well organised with extremely friendly, inspiring and approachable speakers. I am deciding between general practice and paediatrics and this definitely pulled me towards general practice."



## Holding events for trainee doctors and medical students

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

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

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

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

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

## Hints and tips:

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



## 'College Close By' – bringing your Faculty closer to local members

At a time when GPs are working longer and longer hours, it can be increasingly difficult for members to travel long distances to attend meetings and events.

Therefore a number of Faculties are increasingly considering the possibility of holding meetings or events at locations around the Faculty area, as well as in the main urban centre. 'College Close By' is an innovative idea through which Faculties arrange meetings in places other than in the usual town or city.

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

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

## Hints and tips:

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





# Revitalising a Faculty Board

When long-standing members of a particular Faculty Board eventually retire or leave the area, and there are few active members left on the Board, it can at times seem like a real challenge to sustain the Faculty, especially when newer GPs in the area seem to have little interest in becoming active in the Faculty. Therefore, it can often require a sustained drive to turn the Faculty around. In 2008, the South East Wales Faculty Board found itself in a similar situation and decided it was time to take a risk. The Board chose to stage a panel discussion on a controversial ethical topic – ‘Perspectives on Termination’ – prior to its AGM. The Treasurer, Dr Jake Hard and Honorary Secretary, Dr Cathy Sloan invited a speaker each to join a panel, along with a nurse, to talk through the challenges faced by GPs. The result was that 34 members attended the AGM, compared with 11 the year before. The Faculty have continued to approach their AGM in a similar way each year, and have not looked back. Numbers have remained at around the same level and critically, attendance at Faculty Board meetings has also increased. The Board has evolved significantly, from nine members in 2008 to 17 in 2015, which includes three AiT and four First5 representatives. In the past, officers fulfilled multiple roles, but with the newly invigorated Board, each position has just one person responsible, thereby lightening the workload on colleagues.

Dr Sloan, who is currently the Faculty Provost, and was, until recently, the Chair, played a key role in the revival. She says: “I only went to my first meeting, back in 2007, because it was about revalidation – something I knew very little about and was worried about. “When I got there, I was shocked to discover how few people usually attended. I was asked whether I’d like to join the Board and another GP, about the same age as me, also joined. “The GPs already on the Board all looked older and more experienced – both as GPs and as committee members. However, everyone was very welcoming...even though I had to bring my baby with me to a couple of meetings! Everyone listened to what I said and I felt useful from the start. “We provide food at evening meetings, as we know that many GPs come straight from surgery, or with only a few minutes at home first. We start at 7pm with food; 7.30pm for the meeting, so that the meetings don’t finish too late, which is important if people have far to travel home. “We mainly use hotels on the edge of Cardiff at M4 junctions, so they are more easily accessible to all.” The Cumbria Faculty which, over the last few years has struggled to attract members to its meetings, transformed itself over the latter half of 2015, by encouraging younger members of the College to get actively involved. This has led to attendance figures at Board meetings increasing – and greater engagement with local GPs in general. The new Chair Dr Iqbal Meeran and new Honorary Secretary Dr Craig Trotter are

both First5s, while an AiT Treasurer, Vicky Trotter, has been appointed to shadow the existing Honorary Treasurer Dr Mike Mort, with the intention of stepping up to the role when the time is right. The Faculty Board is trying to take a fresh approach and is actively trying to ensure succession planning through getting young GPs embedded in the Faculty, and as a result of its new outlook, the Faculty appears to have been given a new lease of life. As the make up of general practice changes, with more than 50% of College members being female and a third being from BME backgrounds, it is imperative that each Faculty Board strives to reflect the composition of the workforce in its local area.

## Hints and tips:

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



## Abandoning the traditional Faculty agenda

The Sheffield Faculty has taken a slightly radical approach to revitalising its Board. Following a poorly attended AGM – which Faculty Vice Chair Dr Ben Jackson describes as being particularly ‘drab’ – the Board decided to abandon its traditional agenda for its meeting in June 2015 in favour of an informally-structured event. In advance of the meeting, the Faculty officers – led by Chair Dr Janet Hall – made a point of inviting a cross-section of members, including medical students, early career members and individuals who had expressed disillusionment with the College. Through this approach, the Board managed to attract 12 members to the meeting – up from five at the previous regular Board meeting. The delegates attending were organised into small ‘buzz groups’ – with flip charts – and all given the same brief, which was to list what they felt the Faculty should be aiming to do. The meeting provided members with the opportunity to voice their opinions and have their say on their vision for the Faculty and the College, with views and suggestions fed back to the whole group at the end. The debate was lively and all attendees appreciated the chance to talk about things other than policy – as well as gaining an understanding that the Faculty can determine its own priorities and direction. It was clear from the group that the Faculty needed to look at new ways to engage with members and better explain what it has to offer. The meeting lasted 30 minutes longer than a usual Faculty Board meeting – and three important resolutions, based around

the need for inclusivity, were arrived at. These were to:

- Conduct a Survey Monkey poll of all Sheffield Faculty members to discover:
  - Whether they knew the Faculty existed,
  - Whether they knew what the Faculty does and
  - What they thought the Faculty should be doing for its members.
- Propose a motion to a future meeting of the UK College Council to change the Faculty name, and
- Become thoroughly engaged with both local medical schools and First5 GPs.

Dr Jackson says: “The brainstorming session was intended to be inclusive and give members hope for the future. While there were initially some challenging opinions in the room, the positive results and renewed energy from the Faculty Board since this session have been clearly felt. “We are attracting members to the Board who have never attended before, despite being College members, some of them, for upwards of 20 years. We want to support members and give them pride in their own careers as well as in general practice as a speciality.” The outcomes of this meeting are that Sheffield Faculty now offers greater support to First5s and to medical students – with two student reps now appointed permanently to the Board. There is also a rejuvenated Fellowship Committee that continues the theme of inclusivity, with both patient and medical student reps as members, as well as a much closer working relationship with the Postgraduate Deanery.

In addition, Sheffield Faculty Board is now experiencing the highest level of attendance at its Faculty Board meetings for many years, with 12 members attending the June 2015 meeting, 15 attending the meeting in September, and 16 members in attendance at the November meeting. As a result of the increased attendance figures, the Faculty now has the pleasant challenge of having to consider larger venues for future meetings. The East Anglia Faculty has adopted a similar approach, with one of their Board meetings consisting of 30 minutes allocated to discuss regular agenda items and the rest left as an open forum, encouraging networking and development sessions. This approach has led to members feeling more engaged with their Faculty and willing to attend Board meetings. The fact that Faculties can hold meetings at which the traditional formal agenda is abandoned and instead run a brainstorming session is one of the best kept secrets at the College. For those thinking of abandoning the traditional agenda approach in favour of an agenda-less meeting, the College’s Company Secretary Robert Foster says that constitutionally it is very much permissible for Faculties to drop their agenda once a year to have an open forum discussion. Board members can discuss and agree feedback on policy and other papers outside of the Board meeting, with responses being sent back to the College HQ through the appropriate channels.

## Hints and tips:

- Consider whether your Faculty Board would benefit from occasionally abandoning the traditional agenda and holding a brainstorming session instead.
- When holding a topical discussion, consider inviting First5s and AiTs, as they may choose to attend if the issue is of particular interest to them.
- If you would like guidance on how much leeway a Faculty Board has constitutionally to abandon the traditional agenda, speak to your Regional Engagement Manager.



## Attracting local members to Faculty AGMs

As Faculties increasingly try to engage with a larger number of local GPs many are taking innovative approaches in an effort to ensure the highest possible turn out of members at their AGMs.

In November 2015, the North West England Faculty held their AGM and awards dinner at the Old Trafford football stadium, home to Manchester United, with guest speakers including former Manchester United goalkeeper Alex Stepney and former College Chair Dr Clare Gerada. As a result, the AGM secured one of the highest attendance figures for a Faculty AGM in living memory, with more than 150 guests.

The previous month, Mersey Faculty held its AGM and annual awards dinner at Anfield football stadium, home to Liverpool FC. The evening

was hosted by Faculty Provost Dr Shiv Pande and guest speaker was Professor Christopher Dowrick, from University of Liverpool. On the night, the annual RCGP Mersey Faculty Awards offered an opportunity for Primary Care teams to acknowledge their colleagues' excellence and innovation. The event attracted a healthy turnout of 100 guests. In the same month as the North West England Faculty AGM, the South London Faculty held its AGM and awards dinner at RCGP headquarters, 30 Euston Square, central London. Following the dinner, the Faculty held its awards ceremony, including a New Member and New Fellows Ceremony, which attracted 23 new members to the Faculty. This innovative idea encouraged new members to attend the meeting and hear about the work that goes on at a local level. The

keynote speaker was Professor Val Wass, who spoke about the work the College does internationally. College Assistant Honorary Treasurer Dr Steve Mowle spoke about his work in South Africa. Overall, there was an impressive turnout of 80 guests.

### Hints and tips:

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

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A poster promoting an event run by RCGP London

## Faculties working in partnership

In recent years, a number of Faculties have formed partnerships with each other in order to deliver enhanced services to members across a region.

In 2009, Yorkshire, Sheffield, and Humber and the Ridings Faculties established the White Rose initiative in order to avoid duplication of CSA and AKT course delivery.

All three Faculties contributed funding, created a joint bank account from which to administer the work and initially appointed a Chair, with the post-holder

rotating between the three partners to oversee the work.

Over the past seven years, White Rose – which now has a paid Education Lead, which is equally funded by each Faculty – has become an extremely successful vehicle from which to deliver valued and popular events to members regionally. During the period between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, it delivered six education and networking events, which were attended by 125 delegates. Another major cross-Faculty collaboration is RCGP London, which was formed to

support collaboration between the three London Faculties – North and West London, North East London and South London – and represent one voice for the capital's members both within RCGP and with external organisations.

RCGP London meets regularly and is attended by members from across the three London Faculties including the Faculty Chairs, Education Leads and First5/ AiT representatives, and all London Faculty Board members are invited. The members feed back from their respective Faculties and aim to share best practice and encourage a collaborative rather than competitive approach to support the capital's GP workforce.

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

RCGP London more recently formed a sub group, the RCGP London First5/ AiT Committee, which is growing in membership and aims to provide support specifically to junior doctors. The Committee held its successful 'Life after VTS study day' in June last year, with a programme specially tailored to the challenges of inner city healthcare. During the period between 1 September 2014 and 31 August 2015, RCGP London delivered four education and networking events, which were attended by 170 delegates.

### Hints and tips:

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

The Faculties are forging ahead and innovating in different areas.

Since the summer of 2014:

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

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