

Development and Evolution of the iGP Fellowship Scheme to Provide a Diverse Range of Roles for GPs that Address Clinical and Educational Priorities across Wales

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Context and Approach:

The Integrated Care GP (iGP) Fellowship Scheme, aims to address the growing need for stronger, more coordinated care closer to home across primary and community services in Wales. The project responds to workforce challenges, fragmented service delivery, and the need for greater GP engagement in system-wide transformation. Our objective is to equip newly qualified GPs with the skills, confidence, and experience to lead integrated care initiatives in their local areas. We are approaching this through a structured one-year fellowship programme that combines clinical sessions with tailored educational components, including leadership development, quality improvement training, and interdisciplinary learning across health care settings with mentoring and financial contribution to build a supportive and fulfilling working environment for our GPs.

Progress to date:

Research and Evaluation:

Recruitment, Retention & Career Progression
Healthcare Service Impact

Workforce Development & Skills Acquisition
Financial Value & Educational Support

- Semi-structured interviews at beginning, middle and end with thematic analysis.
- Activities reports from iGPs every 6 months.



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Leadership:

- iGP Fellows develop leadership skills through quality improvement projects, system-level collaboration, and exposure to cross-sector working.
- Programme Director provides strategic leadership, shaping a national fellowship that builds future GP leaders and fosters innovation.
- GP Practices enhance their leadership culture by mentoring Fellows and contributing to service development and workforce sustainability.
- Wider Healthcare Community benefits from a leadership-ready GP workforce that supports integrated care and strengthens cross-sector collaboration.

Education/teaching:

Education and learning are central to the iGP Fellowship, with each Fellow supported to pursue postgraduate qualifications, develop specialist interests, and engage in leadership and quality improvement training. The programme offers structured educational sessions, mentorship, and opportunities for reflective practice—equipping iGPs with the skills and confidence to contribute meaningfully to both clinical care and system-level change.

Future Activity:

The next phase of the iGP Scheme will focus on consolidating progress and strengthening its long-term impact. A key milestone will be presenting evaluation data in April next year to key stakeholders, including HEIW, the Welsh Government, and the RCGP, to demonstrate outcomes and inform future planning. Alongside this, I will continue to actively seek and utilise any opportunities to raise the profile of the scheme and expand its reach. A priority will be to establish connections with Scottish fellowship schemes, sharing learning and exploring alignment. I aim to arrange a joint meeting to discuss best practice, potential collaboration, and how we can collectively strengthen primary care leadership across the UK.

Reflections:

The iGP scheme aligns well with the Scottish Fellowships, particularly around rural health and inequalities, offering potential for shared learning. Enablers include strong workforce demand for portfolio roles, while barriers include limited Health Board engagement and lack of dedicated funding. Since application, the model has shifted—following a proposal to HEIW—to focus on supporting newly qualified rural GPs with QI, leadership, research, and partnership model learning.

Feedback – Current iGPs 2025/26:

This job is showing me there's potential to have a bigger impact—beyond just one practice. It's helping me build skills and gain insight into how different teams and organisations work together, and that's something I wouldn't have got from just doing clinical work.

The fellowship allows me to develop a second interest and explore other areas, so there's a lot of value in that... It feels like an easier transition from being a trainee, and it's much better for building skills that will help me down the line.