

The Scottish Academy Manifesto 2021 – outlining policy priorities for Scottish healthcare

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland (the "Scottish Academy") promotes and co-ordinates the work of the Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties and gives the medical professions a collective voice on clinical and professional issues in Scotland. In December 2019 we published our strategic priorities to 2023ⁱ. Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic the Scottish Academy has enabled clinicians from a wide range of specialties from across Scotland to provide advice and guidance to the NHS in Scotland as it has gone through a time of unprecedented change.ⁱⁱ We are glad to say that the priorities we highlighted in 2019 remain of crucial importance and call upon all political parties to embed them into their vision for the future of the Scottish NHS.

Our manifesto calls for better health by prevention, a commitment to banish all forms of health inequality, investment to build on new ways of working and better collaboration across all sectors. We call for Scotland to ensure it recruits and trains the right medical workforce, and that doctors work in supportive environments throughout their whole career.

We would be very pleased to discuss any of our manifesto points with you.

Key manifesto points:

Make health a major consideration in determining all areas of government policy

Why? The determinants of health are much wider than the necessary availability of high-quality health services.

How?

- Mandatory health impact assessment integrated into policy making in all Scottish Government departments
- Ensuring everyone has income at a level that supports healthy living, through policies such as progressive taxation and guaranteed minimum income
- Ensuring that everyone in Scotland has access to a high-quality education and that any barriers to higher educational attainment is removed for any groups
- Improving access to active transport across Scotland
- Taking bold action to address the societal damage of drug and alcohol misuse.

Build back fairer: make the NHS better than before in terms of health equity

Why? The NHS needs to be working at its best, providing care where it is needed most, or health inequalities will worsen further

How?

- Identify solutions to address the risk of all forms of health exclusion, including digital exclusion, for vulnerable patients
- Focus on health education and prevention for all ages
- Ensure equality impact assessments are undertaken in any intended service redesign
- Resource services according to the need of the population served
- Incorporate 'Work as a Health Outcome' into every health interaction, recognising the importance of employment and economic security in addressing inequalities
- Plan ahead for future major health crises, learning from our own experiences, and that of others.

- Support innovation in the NHS, fund and encourage participation in research into prevention and treatment of common conditions that matter to our patients and enable uptake and spread of new prevention strategies, treatments and technologies.

Improve communication systems between hospitals and communities

Why? Better inter-professional communication, support and collaboration improves patient care in terms of both experience and outcome, but also efficiency and value for money.

How?

- Establish dedicated funded interface groups in every Board area based on the Joint Principles developed by RCGP and BMA and endorsed by Scottish Academy ⁱⁱⁱFund dedicated digital advice messaging systems, phone lines or emails for every speciality
- Invest in new pathways such as perioperative care
- Promote collaboration between clinicians and managers with NHS Scotland finding ways of engaging staff towards consensus, hearing what is being said and taking advice from clinical voices.

Make Digital Working the best it can be

Why? Digital healthcare is here to stay, but it needs investment and consideration of the potential risks.

How?

- Invest in the NHS IT infrastructure and practical IT support to ensure reliable, efficient, safe systems
- Improve IT connectivity across the NHS to improve information sharing, consistency and quality of care
- Embedding videoconferencing as a usual means of conducting meetings, consultations and follow-up
- Ensure software systems are fit for the future and consistent across the country
- Ensure active work is undertaken to mitigate against digital exclusion for patient groups who struggle to access healthcare in remote ways

Build a workforce to meet the needs of our society

Why? Having a diverse, representative medical workforce is better served to meet the needs of the whole population.

How?

- Increase the number of medical student places to meet the needs for an increased medical workforce in the NHS in Scotland.
- Monitor workforce diversity rates on an ongoing basis
- Specifically encourage applications from Scottish domiciled applicants, and under-represented groups (deprived, rural and minority ethnic backgrounds) to ensure the medical workforce represents the wider Scottish population and leads to doctors who wish to live and work in the communities where there is greatest need.
- Ensure funding models for the medical schools can support this policy.
- Ensuring we build the capacity in general practice and hospitals to deliver the required training

Prioritise the re-starting of high quality undergraduate and postgraduate training

Why? Training requirements have been significantly affected during the pandemic, but we now need to catch up and an ongoing commitment to maintain the 'flow' needed to adequately grow the workforce

How:

- Include a commitment in the NHS mobilisation plan to mitigate any adverse effects on training suffered during Covid-19 first wave
- Commit to ensuring training is maintained at a high standard in event of further impact of Covid-19
- Commit to build research capacity in General Practice and Hospital clinical practice to support a world leading health service
- Examine and implement appropriate and available digital training options
- Commit to expanding training programmes and opportunities for the trainee workforce

Safeguard the wellbeing of our workforce and focus on a supportive workplace culture

Why? A well workforce working in a caring and supportive environment is a more efficient, cohesive, safer workforce and offers is better able to serve the care needs of patients.

How?

- Ensure a maintained focus on the day-to-day and longer-term wellbeing of all staff.
- Commit at every level to building a new culture to help build sustainability and resilience. This will prioritise the physical and psychological safety of staff as core values within the NHS to build loyalty, productivity and retention.
- Prioritise urgently practitioner wellbeing as outlined in the Sturrock review. The Scottish Academy calls for investment in Occupational Health and Wellbeing services and initiatives for staff, such as the Practitioner Health Programme, which is already available in other parts of the UK.
- Simplify the mandatory annual appraisal process to ensure it also supports practitioner wellbeing while still offering the public assurance that the doctors are safe to practice.
- Support the older workforce to enable an ongoing contribution to the NHS in the later stages of their career.

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Chair of the Scottish Academy

ENDS

Notes

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland - known as the "Scottish Academy" - contributes to improvements in the health of the people of Scotland by the promotion and co-ordination of the work of the Medical Royal College and Faculties and giving the medical professions a collective voice on clinical and professional issues.

The main objectives of the Scottish Academy are:

- To ensure quality of care and patient safety is maximised by maintaining and improving standards within the profession

- To provide a co-ordinated voice from the specialties in relation to education, training, clinical standards and effectiveness and research and quality which are supported and promoted by all constituent members.
- To co-ordinate and exchange expertise across the Colleges and Faculties in all areas of training, medical education and revalidation
- To support improved medical workforce planning in Scotland to recruit and retain the highest quality doctors

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Notes:

ⁱ The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland
Strategic Priorities 2020-2023

<http://www.scottishacademy.org.uk/sites/default/files/Scottish%20Academy%20Priorities%202020%20Final%20signed%20off.docx>

ⁱⁱ The NHS in Scotland after the COVID Surge: Now and Next Year <http://www.scottishacademy.org.uk/nhs-scotland-after-covid-surge-now-and-next-year>

- ⁱⁱⁱ Joint Principles Statement from RCGP Scotland and BMA Scotland
<https://www.scottishacademy.org.uk/whole-systems-working-joint-bma-rcgp-statement>