



GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

in the Scottish Health Service

The value of international volunteering



ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS AND
SURGEONS OF GLASGOW

This document is an executive summary of the full report. To access the full report, containing more detailed information and case studies, please visit: rcp.sg/globalcitizenship

Produced by the Communications team of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.

Authors	Stuart J Fergusson Michael J McKirdy
Editors	Elaine Mulcahy Lucy Adams
Design	Shaw
Print	Winter and Simpson Print

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FOREWORD

Many NHSScotland staff give their time and expertise to volunteering work in healthcare settings across the world. I am delighted to welcome this timely report which reviews and analyses volunteering activity by NHSScotland staff. Many of you will have been involved yourselves or will know someone who has. It is common for Scottish staff to experience significant personal and professional growth from time abroad. When a health service worker steps outside their normal environment it frequently leads to better cultural sensitivity and an openness to doing things differently. I believe there is much to learn from healthcare colleagues working in lesser resourced environments, who often show great ingenuity and a healthy pragmatism in their service delivery.



This review has taken into account a broad range of perspectives, including input from all of Scotland's Health Boards as well as charities, professional organisations, subject experts and volunteers themselves. I welcome the findings that there are mutual benefits where NHSScotland staff choose to volunteer abroad. Successful development work in partner countries occurs on both long and short term visits by Scottish staff, but sustainable and meaningful change is made more likely where the principles of effective partnership are carefully followed, including, for example, alignment with existing priorities.

This review faces challenges inherent in international activity head-on, taking into consideration the challenges of maintaining a high quality of service to Scottish patients during employee absence, financial costs and the need to consider personal health and safety risks. Health service concerns about service gaps may explain the experience of some volunteers, who report a lack of support for their international work and this review rightly considers the varied access to opportunities around Scotland.

I am keen that the evidence based recommendations that the College makes for improving our engagement with global health needs are considered in depth by NHSScotland and the Scottish Global Health Committee I chair. The Scottish Government has a clear commitment to Global Citizenship, and to the attainment of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals both domestically and internationally. This report outlines how the health service can play its part in this commitment, with the articulation of a distinctive Scottish approach to global health engagement. We need to recognise and appreciate the value of international volunteering and commit to the principles of effective partnership and mutual development. I would encourage all those who are considering a period of volunteering, or who are responsible for colleagues who might wish to volunteer, to take the time to read this report and consider the recommendations within.

"We will meet in the developing world a level of will, skill, and constancy that may put ours to shame. We may well find ourselves not the teachers we thought we were, but students of those who simply will not be stopped under circumstances that would have stopped us long ago." (Don Berwick)

Dr Catherine Calderwood

MA Cantab, FRCOG, FRCP(Edin)
Chief Medical Officer for Scotland



INTRODUCTION

"As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest... overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice."

Nelson Mandela spoke these words to the 20,000 people gathered in Trafalgar Square on 3rd February 2005, but his wider audience included the leaders of the world's largest economies as they met to determine their response to severe and persistent global inequalities.



That year also marked the publication of the first international development policy of a devolved Scottish administration, which set out to promote *"the positive contribution that Scotland can make to the world, and in particular to developing countries"*.¹ This policy set key priorities for international development efforts, in alignment with the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Health has remained a critical component in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in December 2016, the Scottish Government launched its refreshed International Development Strategy, 'Global Citizenship', reaffirming its belief that Scotland *"can play a unique role in finding solutions to the common challenges facing our world"*.²

This report from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow outlines how Scotland's health service can deliver our national commitment to good global citizenship, and we explore the value of this to our country. We are pleased to have secured the views of all Scotland's territorial and special Health Boards to inform this assessment, alongside many other key organisations and individuals. This report focuses on international volunteering by Scotland's health service workers but necessarily we speak to the broader context of global health engagement. We contrast our current approach with neighbouring countries and conclude that action is required to place Scotland at the forefront of best practice.

In committing to both domestic and international implementation of the SDGs, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon stated that *"we need to grasp the opportunity that following this path offers to create a fairer Scotland and a better world both now and for generations to come"*.³

We urge the Scottish health service to 'grasp the opportunity', embracing a culture of global citizenship which initiates and supports international health partnerships with less developed economies. We contend that such a culture reflects Scotland's heritage and values, and in turn offers substantial benefit to Scotland's health sector workers, our healthcare services and our nation.

Stuart J Fergusson

BSc (Med Sci), ChM, MRCS(Glasg), FHEA
Clinical Leadership Fellow
Royal College of Physicians and
Surgeons of Glasgow

Michael J McKirdy

FRCSGlasg(Gen Surg)
Director of Global Health
Royal College of Physicians and
Surgeons of Glasgow

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Findings and Conclusions

Global citizenship is viewed by the Scottish Government as a core national value. It is the title of the Government's new International Development Strategy², and has a key position in our national schools programme 'Curriculum for Excellence'⁴. Global citizenship is both a concept and an attitude which welcomes diversity, global solidarity, and which pursues justice both at home and abroad. The Scottish Government has expressed this value by embracing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals⁵ as a dual commitment to tackling inequalities at home and to helping developing countries grow in a fair and sustainable way. In addition to Scotland's contribution to the UK aid budget, the Scottish Government currently distributes a further £11 million per year towards international development and on efforts to reduce the impact of climate change on the world's poorest communities.

Engagement of the Scottish health service in improving health and healthcare around the world is a necessary reflection of these policy commitments. Quite apart from a moral commitment to global citizenship are two further compelling reasons for Scotland's health service to engage in global health work:

- **common challenges:** disease epidemics, drug-resistant infections, and non-communicable disease burdens do not respect national boundaries and need to be tackled with international cooperation.
- **mutual learning opportunities:** engagement in global health work brings proven benefits to our health workers and our healthcare system.

Evidence for the mutual benefits of global health work is accumulating steadily in the academic literature and in the experience of health systems that have combined the development of global health work with training and service delivery. Benefits to individuals can accrue in a range of domains including:

- leadership and management skills
- communication and teamwork
- clinical skills
- policy awareness and experience
- academic skills
- patient experience and dignity
- personal resilience, satisfaction and interest



Engaging in international volunteering will broaden an individual's views and present different challenges... with increased exposure to differing healthcare environments comes a greater understanding and creativity in solving problems.

- Clare McKenzie, Postgraduate Dean, East Region – Scotland Deanery.



Benefits to NHSScotland include:

- enhancement of recruitment and retention
- system learning and capacity building
- professional development of the workforce
- improved Scottish patient experience
- reputational development



Seeing health care delivered under such pressure encourages me to think about what aspects of care are really critical and which can be done without, if need be.

- Consultant Paediatrician Charlotte Wright describing her visits to the Children's Hospital and Institute of Child Health in Lahore, Pakistan.



The challenges and risks that can be associated with global health work include:

- maintaining NHS service delivery during employee absence
- financial costs to individuals and services
- personal health and security risks
- opportunity costs (for example professional or family sacrifices)
- issues with professional regulation
- reputational risk to NHS services

Global health experience appears to be widespread in UK health workers. A large cross-sectional study of health workers in the North-West of England found that 42% of staff had experienced at least one overseas placement, with 80% of these experiences in a low- or middle-income country.

A survey by the Scottish Global Health Collaborative of 391 NHSScotland employees (see Remit and Approach for details) included 105 respondents who had undertaken recent global health work. Of these 105 respondents:

- 88% of respondents delivered their global health work on a 'fully' or 'partly' voluntary basis.
- 63% of respondents had no experience or awareness of support from their Health Boards.



Although there was great enthusiasm and support prior to my visit, there were small but vocal pockets of lack-lustre senior management support at the same time... I was left with a guarded and embarrassed feel on return. It was as though I had done something wrong or had enjoyed a 'jolly' at the expense of other colleagues.

- Anonymous staff member



In their direct response to our stakeholder engagement, senior management teams from Scottish Health Boards provided the following key information:

- Boards do not have bespoke policy provisions for the support of global health work.
- Boards are unable to quantify the extent of international volunteering in their organisations since this information is not routinely collected.
- Boards suggest that the current NHSScotland approach to international volunteering can be improved through greater national coordination and support.



Global health activity is being formalised and coordinated in other administrations:

- **England** has published a number of strategy and guidance documents, and have established the 'Global Health Exchange' in Health Education England to support workforce development.
- **Wales** has legislated on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, established an 'International Health Coordination Centre' and agreed a 'Charter for International Health Partnerships'.
- **The Republic of Ireland** is establishing a global health office within the Health Services Executive and have developed codes of best practice in volunteering.

International health partnerships are of proven value to health systems with lower resources than our own. In an era of financial stringency and challenging performance targets, careful consideration needs to be given to how Scotland can strategically share some of its substantial human resources and intellectual capital with partners in the developing world. Such an approach should enhance benefit to both Scotland and its international partners, and should also avoid stifling individual efforts or innovation.

Global health work can sharpen and motivate our workforce in their primary task of delivering healthcare to the people of Scotland, and when undertaken thoughtfully and respectfully can be a powerful international statement of Scottish character and values.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Recommendations

Many Scottish health service workers are currently undertaking high quality international development work in the health domain, predominantly on a voluntary basis. These individual efforts are in tune with the Scottish Government's dual commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, implementing domestically and contributing internationally. This also brings clear benefit to these health service workers and our health service. Our task has been to suggest how the Scottish health service can better encourage, support and coordinate this commitment and activity. A summary of our eight recommendations is provided below. A fuller explanation and exploration of each is found in Section 4 of the full report. These suggested areas for action take into account the views we received from each of Scotland's Health Boards, our extensive stakeholder engagement exercise, the Collaborative survey and our literature review.

1

DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC APPROACH:

NHSScotland should consider articulating a strategic approach to global health engagement which embraces global citizenship in the Scottish health service.

Elsewhere in the UK, and beyond, administrations have laid out their vision for global health engagement and the time is right for Scotland's health service to do the same. This will reflect a continuation of Scotland's devolutionary journey and be a statement of her international outlook. Articulating a strategic approach can bring focus and enhanced effectiveness to existing international health work, ensuring that we deliver value for money abroad, mitigate risks and capitalise on the benefits to our NHS. Many Health Boards expressed the view that our approach to international volunteering by NHS workers can be improved through clearer guidance that can be applied consistently to all staff across Scotland.

Articulation of a Scottish approach to global health work might result in a focus of resource and expertise in keeping with the current Scottish Government International Development strategy², with its sub-Saharan project base of Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda, and educational links with Pakistan.

2

PROFESSIONALISING COORDINATION AND SUPPORT:

The Scottish Government should consider professionalising and resourcing coordination and support of global health work at a national level.

Enhancing our global health work requires capacity and a modest investment in professionalising support and development. This capacity could be provided by a Scottish Global Health Coordination Centre, which might have the following purposes:

- Developing and articulating global health policies and strategy.
- Providing practical and policy expertise to individuals and organisations on the planning and delivery of global health activity.
- Identifying and publicising funding opportunities for global health work.
- Providing a central point for liaison with Scottish Government departments and with jurisdictions elsewhere.

3

MAXIMISING BENEFIT:

NHSScotland should consider exploring how the potential personal and professional benefits of global health work could best be maximised in the Scottish health service.

One of the anticipated benefits of a renewed health service commitment to global citizenship and international engagement is more proactive capitalisation of the benefits of global health work. Our report explores examples of how international placements have been used to boost recruitment and retention, and enhance development of professional and leadership skills. We can learn from these initiatives. We believe that there is scope to better capture and recognise the value of existing international work. Supporting health service workers in global health work is an intelligent investment in staff development and can boost morale.

4

ENSURING EFFECTIVENESS:

NHSScotland should support global health work which is needs-led and follows principles of effective partnership working.

A strategic Scottish approach to global health work should include an institutional commitment to established principles of effective partnership and reflect the Scottish Government's policy commitment in its 2016 International Development Strategy to the "beyond aid" agenda. This will reinforce best practice and curtail ineffectual interventions, and could measure success in this area by consistent evaluation of global health work. While formal institution to institution partnerships have proven an effective model of co-development, we suggest that smaller scale individual partnerships should also be supported, as they can also be of mutual benefit and may lead to larger collaborative efforts.

5

VALUING COLLABORATION:

NHSScotland should consider committing to collaborative engagement and advocacy on global health issues.

Consistent and collaborative institutional engagement on global health work will help to address barriers and challenges in international activity, will share Scotland's considerable expertise in development work, and will provide advocacy for our interests. It is important that the Scottish health service is aware of and involved in wider UK international development policy developments and able to take advantage of all funding streams. Within Scotland, the various elements of the health service and the academic community should seek opportunities for information sharing and collaborative working.

6

EXPRESSING LOCAL COMMITMENT:

NHSScotland should consider asking all Health Boards to articulate a focused organisational commitment to global citizenship.

We believe that tangible delivery of global citizenship values in the Scottish health service depends on them being valued and expressed in individual Health Boards. This report outlines how some Boards and individual hospitals have formalised international health links and reaped the benefits of long-standing partnerships. We recognise that the first priority of Boards must remain high quality local service delivery, but suggest that staff and service development through proportionate, considered international work complements rather than hinders this objective.

7

DEFINING SUPPORT MECHANISMS:

NHSScotland, in partnership with Health Boards, should consider defining support mechanisms for international volunteering.

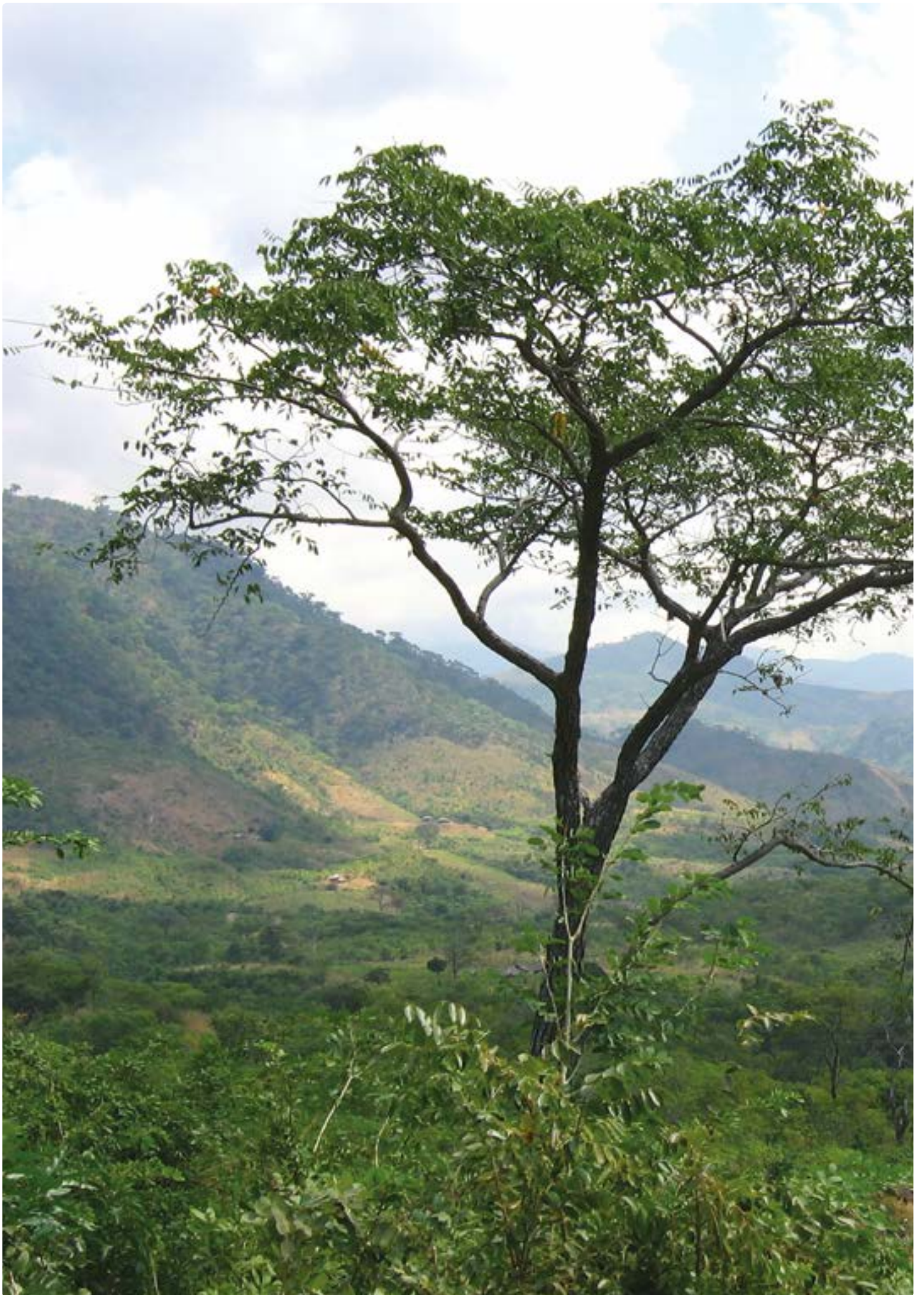
Most Health Boards responding to our call for views and evidence suggested a “once for Scotland” approach which applied consistent guidance to all staff. Most global health visits are undertaken in annual leave. Some organisations are allowing more flexible use of study leave in international development work, reflecting the element of personal development that is often occurring on such visits. Unpaid leave, sabbaticals and career breaks offer another route to undertaking work abroad. Policy development in this area could direct health workers towards focus areas for Health Boards or NHSScotland, but should avoid stifling more ad-hoc relationships which are often a springboard for later development of formalised partnerships.

8

SETTING EXPECTATIONS:

NHSScotland should consider articulating its expectations of Scottish health service workers when engaging in global health work.

While the focus in this report is on institutional opportunities and responsibilities, it will be Scottish health service workers who represent Scotland internationally. We believe that a clear statement of employer expectations in this area of activity will inform staff, support best practice and mitigate against reputational risk from poorly conducted volunteering.





REMIT AND APPROACH

This report by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow has been supported by the Scottish Global Health Collaborative, an interest group established in October 2015 and chaired by Scotland's Chief Medical Officer. The Collaborative's aim is to work with the Scottish Government and partners in the wider health community to promote effective and coordinated health sector involvement in global health.

The Collaborative asked the College to produce a report which would:

- define and describe current international volunteering by Scottish health workers
- evaluate the benefits and challenges of international volunteering to the Scottish NHS
- appraise the current approach by NHSScotland to international volunteering by its staff
- suggest what actions would deliver improved benefit from global health work to Scottish health workers and the Scottish health system, and improved benefit to partners abroad

From January 2016 to March 2017, the Collaborative gathered evidence on the attitudes and experiences of Scottish health workers through an online survey administered by the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET). This was distributed through Health Boards and international development networks. A total of 455 responses were received from all sectors, and 391 were NHSScotland employees. Of these 391 NHSScotland employees, 105 had undertaken global health work within the last 5 years. Data from this survey is used to inform the report.

This report has also been informed by a review of key reports, existing policies from Scotland and elsewhere, published academic literature, non-published literature and a wide-ranging stakeholder engagement exercise.

We formally sought opinions from senior management teams in all territorial and special Health Boards in Scotland, all of whom provided a response. We also consulted Scottish Government policy teams, key academic, professional and charitable organisations operating in Scotland, and individual subject experts from Scotland and beyond. Grateful acknowledgment to the many participants and supporters of this work is given at the end of the full report. Their input is fully integrated into the report and occasionally quoted verbatim. Where anonymity was requested, this has been respected.

This document is an executive summary of the full report. To access the full report, containing more detailed information and case studies, please visit: rcp.sg/globalcitizenship



ROYAL COLLEGE OF
PHYSICIANS AND
SURGEONS OF GLASGOW

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
AND SURGEONS OF GLASGOW
232-242 St Vincent Street
Glasgow, G2 5RJ
T +44 (0)141 221 6072
F +44 (0)141 221 1804
rcpsg.ac.uk

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