

RCGP and SIGN clinical engagement compact

October 2022

RCGP and SIGN compact

The RCGP and SIGN compact is a partnership agreement between the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN), Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) in Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) and GPs who work with us. It is designed to facilitate a clearer understanding about what we can expect from each other to ensure meaningful and sustainable relationships with clinical communities and take forward improvements to patient care.

SIGN Council is the policy making body for SIGN with overall responsibility for methodology and editorial policy.

Two SIGN Council members are nominated by RCGP. The RCGP SIGN Council members represent RCGP Scotland and aim to encourage, foster and maintain the highest possible standards in general medical practice representing around 5,000 doctors in Scotland. SIGN Council members determine the overall direction of SIGN's development and play a key role in shaping the SIGN guideline programme.

Some are also actively involved in aspects of the guideline development process and all provide input into the prioritisation of topics for guideline development groups (GDG).

RCGP SIGN Council members have deputies and SIGN encourages those in the early part of their careers to take on this role including First5 GPs. They will have an opportunity to attend SIGN Council meetings. The RCGP SIGN Council members will mentor and support the RCGP early careers representative.

GDGs are multidisciplinary and include GPs and other primary care practitioners. This is a professional leadership role and an opportunity to enhance knowledge and skills in a specific therapeutic area, enhance critical appraisal skills, leading to recommendations and changes in clinical practice. 91% of clinicians involved in SIGN guidelines would recommend it to colleagues.

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Working with SIGN Council and guideline development groups

Royal College of General Practitioners and Healthcare Improvement Scotland with SIGN will:

- Ensure clear and transparent processes are in place to support you to work with us
- Share information with you about our work
- Provide support for your career development and ensure continuous professional development recognition
- Provide engagement and networking opportunities, both within our organisations and at national level
- Work with you to continually review and improve our approach to engaging with GPs.

GPs on GDGs will:

- Provide clinical expertise, from a primary care perspective with detailed knowledge of the clinical context of practice to enhance the SIGN guideline development process
- Be part of a multidisciplinary group conducting a systematic review to identify and critically appraise the evidence to produce recommendations to explicitly linked to the supporting evidence
- Help SIGN identify key stakeholder groups to consult with
- Act as an ambassador for SIGN
- Liaise with RCGP SIGN Council members to ensure GDG work is developed sensitive to wider general practice considerations
- Work with RCGP SIGN Council members to communicate SIGN recommendations to the wider clinical community
- Clearly articulate the support that you will require to help you to work with us

- Accept and provide feedback constructively
- Produce guidelines using a robust and rigorous methodology in line with current best practice.

RCGP representatives on SIGN Council will:

- Attend all meetings of SIGN Council or arrange for a deputy to attend in their place – the RCGP deputy may be in the early part of their career
- Represent the views of RCGP Scotland
- Feedback to RCGP Scotland on the activities of SIGN
- Assist in selecting GDG chairs and members
- Attend open national open meetings to discuss draft guidelines in their specialty
- Participate in the editorial group for guidelines relevant to general practice
- Participate in promotional activities following publication of guidelines in their specialty.



Engagement benefits for general practitioners

Benefits to you:

- Your contribution is acknowledged providing evidence for appraisal Domain accreditation
- Enhanced training and skills opportunities
- Opportunity to develop the skills to critically appraise an evidence base and inform recommendations
- Opportunity to work with multidisciplinary colleagues who have a shared focus on improving patient care
- Contributes to your continued professional development and strengthens the recognition of your expertise
- An opportunity to contribute and influence at a national level
- Provides multidisciplinary networking opportunities across NHSScotland and beyond.

Benefits to general practice and primary care:

- The potential to build capability and leadership within primary care to deliver lasting improvements
- Enabling collaborative work locally and nationally
- National recognition of GPs commitment to supporting evidence-based practice and quality improvement
- Efficient and effective way of supporting, developing and training staff
- Improvement support to enable clinicians to apply their learning in a local setting
- Transferable knowledge, skills and experience that can be shared with colleagues locally
- Shared focus on improving healthcare.



“Working within a multidisciplinary group to support the development of a SIGN guideline on dementia has been a rewarding experience. Due to the specialist and sometimes complex nature of the subject matter I was initially concerned that I would have little to contribute. However I soon realised that there were many aspects of the guidance that benefitted from a general practitioner’s involvement. It allowed me to promote the considerable skills that GPs have in supporting someone with dementia, particularly within the context of their other medical or health conditions. However, it also ensured that the guideline development group were aware of the complexities, demands and limitations that exist within primary care in Scotland. This has enabled us to develop evidence-based recommendations that are person centred, relevant and achievable. At a personal level I was able to enhance my knowledge of dementia, and I found it stimulating and invigorating to work with the other experts on the group.”

Dr Paul Baughan, GP, Dollar Health Centre, Clackmannanshire
Dementia guideline development group member



Engagement benefits for general practitioners (continued)



“It has been a privilege to work as a RCGP Scotland SIGN Council Member.

It is critical as GPs we develop the versatile skills currently needed of us with a depth of skill in a wide scope with broad experience. We have a depth of knowledge and SIGN Council membership helps develop both the skills you have and how you think.

We know tomorrow’s leaders need skills in relationship building, facilitation skills, presentation and coaching skills alongside innovation and design methods as well as project management and improvement methods. However, alongside that must be how we think in interdependent ways both short- and long-term, realistic, but optimistic, seeing the best of our system and those within it, comfortable with the tensions of our healthcare and holding multiple perspectives at the same time.

SIGN Council membership delivers the opportunities to develop all those skills and I am grateful for the opportunities I have had within SIGN Council. I would highly recommend this post to any aspiring GP colleague.”

Dr Scott Jamieson, Kirriemuir Medical Practice, former RCGP representative on SIGN Council



“I would thoroughly recommend GPs to become involved with SIGN guideline working groups if they get the chance. My experience was such a positive one. I gained knowledge listening to the variety of experts within the group. I developed skills in the methodological rigour of appraising papers as well as understanding the way in which a guideline is constructed. These are such helpful generic skills that stand you in good stead when reading medical papers and guidelines. Working for SIGN was also a stepping stone to going on to work in other interesting roles outside my GP sessions. I think it is so important that general practice is represented in this sort of work. I felt my contributions were valued. At the end was a piece of work that I was proud to be a part of and that I could reflect may hopefully be utilised by clinicians around Scotland to improve the quality of care to patients”.

**Dr Jamie Fraser, Southside Surgery
SIGN 142: Management of osteoporosis and the prevention of fragility fractures guideline development group member**



Engagement benefits for general practitioners (continued)



“The Royal College of General Practitioners supports GPs in the delivery of high-quality general practice and SIGN provides high-quality guidelines based on best evidence. As a team we aspire to provide the best evidence-based care for patients. The GPs in Scotland conduct the vast majority of patient consultations.

In an ideal world there would be standardisation of all care but unfortunately patients come to doctors with such diversity in age, gender, ethnicity, language and culture and with a multiplicity of symptoms and presentations, which do not always fit into neat diagnoses, such that the application of guidelines will always be a challenge. I have always believed patients are entitled to present with their chaos, and it is the role of healthcare professionals to create order from that chaos. It is that creation of order from the diverse presentations which is the reason we need guidelines and guidelines which are based firmly on the best evidence. That is guidance which creates the best truth from statistical evidence. In addition, the recent development of qualitative guidelines, especially evidence of the patient’s experience is also key to our decision making as clinicians. Congratulations to SIGN on the coming 30-year anniversary of guidelines. GPs from the RCGP will always need SIGN to guide us and for us to guide patients and look forward to the next 30 years of working together with SIGN.”

Dr David Stephens, RCGP representative on SIGN Council



“As a primary healthcare scientist, I have found working with SIGN and RCGP to be very rewarding. Being involved in the process of identifying and distilling evidence in the fast-moving field of COVID-19 research was both challenging and enjoyable. GP colleagues played a key role in helping us identify the most pressing clinical questions and were pivotal in reviewing the distillation of evidence that was presented to them. I believe our work on SIGN 163: Assessment of COVID-19 in primary care showed how important it is for GPs, other clinical staff and researchers to work together to develop robust, relevant and accessible evidence in a timely manner.”

**Professor Kate O'Donnell, Professor of Primary Care Research & Development
SIGN 163: Assessment of Covid-19 in primary care group member**



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