

Northern Ireland changes to ways of working FAQs

[Policy & Public Affairs: Ireland](#)

In November 2020, RCPCH made some changes to the way our staff work in Northern Ireland, as well as in Scotland and Wales.

Last modified

8 March 2021

Post date

16 November 2020

[Table of contents](#)

- [New ways of working for our devolved nations team – what does this mean?](#)
- [Other changes to the way we work](#)
- [What does this mean for the number of staff working in Northern Ireland?](#)
- [When will these changes take place?](#)
- [Is there any reduction in expertise in the devolved policy, legislative and health service landscape in Northern Ireland?](#)
- [How will RCPCH increase its footprint in the devolved nations in the future?](#)

New ways of working for our devolved nations team – what does this mean?

As you may be aware, we made some changes to the way our staff work in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as of November 2020.

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, our devolved nations team – like staff across the whole organisation – have worked remotely. Initially, this was an emergency response to the first lockdown. The UK's governments mandated that we should all work from home if we could. In some parts of the UK, that hasn't changed at all since March. The Scottish Government have said that organisations should make every reasonable effort to make working from home the default position. It's a similar story in Northern Ireland where people should work at home where possible and in Wales, the Welsh Government have made it clear that they see this as a long term change to help reduce traffic, pollution and noise as well as giving workers greater flexibility.

After several months of working from home, members of staff working in our devolved nations team and the College's Senior Management Team agreed that this is a model that would work for us in the longer term. The technology held up well and has enabled us to work effectively in this way, delivering guidance, advocacy work, member meetings and regular engagement with governments and other stakeholders online.

We're still learning and trying new ideas and technology to make sure this works for staff and members. We're also working through different practicalities in the three devolved nations. But we are confident we can make this work and be responsive to the needs of our members and our staff.

Other changes to the way we work

We have also been updating some of the ways we work so that we can have greater impact in the devolved nations and, over time, increase and improve the service we can offer members in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The external demand on our teams in the nations has grown significantly and as we build our profile and influence, we expect this trend to continue. This is a good thing and a sign of the hard work we're doing to give our members a voice in the devolved nations.

However, with finite capacity, it had become more and more important that the teams in the nations can focus on delivering our policy objectives, advocating on behalf of our members and supporting our Officers and Committees in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to have real influence and impact, drawing on the resources of the wider College to increase support for other areas of work. The wider College is therefore renewing its commitment to delivering for our members across the UK.

What does this mean for the number of staff working in Northern Ireland?

There has been no impact on the number of staff working in Northern Ireland – we continue to have two full time roles based here, working within a structure that is broadly similar to the existing one. This is about increasing our influence and impact in the nations while developing new ways of working in response to the changing external environment. You can't do that by reducing staff numbers. Having a strong staff presence in the nations is central to achieving that impact.

It does mean that staff in Northern Ireland get more support in a range of areas of College activity, so that the direction for the College overall is about increasing and improving our offer to members in the devolved nations.

When will these changes take place?

Staff in Northern Ireland were working remotely since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes to the focus of their work will started in January 2021.

Is there any reduction in expertise in the devolved policy, legislative and health service landscape in Northern Ireland?

No, the aim is to increase this expertise and improve our response to devolved government, politics and health services. That continues to be the major focus for our teams in the devolved nations. Growing this expertise and improving the ways in which we ensure this is fed into all of our outputs as a College is the challenge ahead and we've been working hard to build that into our ways of working across the organisation.

How will RCPCH increase its footprint in the devolved nations in the future?

For the first time, the College now has a commitment to increasing our reach into the devolved nations as a core objective. Across the College, teams are looking at what they need to do.

A number of changes had taken place in our Education and Training structures, which offered scope for better coordination and information exchange between the E&T division and the devolved nations. There are clearer opportunities for involvement of the National Officers in E&T activity, which help guide priority setting and targeting of resources on agreed activities.

Our Events & Marketing team is on hand to offer far more support and engagement than we've had previously. Our Workforce team is working ever closer with staff in the nations to produce nation-specific report and data – which our devolved nations staff are then able to use to advocate on behalf of paediatrics and paediatricians.

Our Policy, Research and Quality Improvement and Devolved Nations teams are working together on products to help parents and health services over what is likely to be a difficult winter. Our Engagement team continue to work with children and young people in all four of the UK's nations to inform all our thinking and outputs, and have protected, ring-fenced time for working in the three devolved nations.

These are just some examples of the kind of work we're doing and the direction of travel. As we work towards our next College strategy, increasing our reach into the nations will be high on the agenda.