

Wales changes to ways of working FAQs

[Policy & Public Affairs: Wales](#)

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

Last modified

8 March 2021

Post date

16 November 2020

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

In November 2020, we made some changes to the way our staff work in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, our devolved nations team – like staff across the whole organisation – 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 Wales that hasn't changed since March 2020. The Welsh Government made it clear that they see this as a long term change to help the environment and economy by reducing traffic, pollution and noise as well as giving workers greater flexibility.

During this time, the College has been involved in a huge amount of advocacy and influencing policy both with the Westminster Government and the Welsh Government. We have been active around high profile issues including re-opening schools, child protection, free school meals and providing information resources for parents who may be confused

about accessing health services during this pandemic. This increased demand for advocacy and policy development is likely to be with us in the long term; we hope children will benefit from our work.

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 they'd like to work to 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. In Wales, this has included a series of meetings with clinical leads to guide us through the Covid pandemic and a meeting of our Executive Committee. We're continuing to learn and try new ideas and technology to make sure this works for staff and members and we are working through different practicalities in the three devolved nations. We are confident we can make this work and be responsive both to the needs of our members and our staff.

Other changes to the way we work

We have also updated 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 know that they can draw upon the resources of the wider College and that all of our teams and divisions renew their commitment to delivering for our members across the UK. That enables staff in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland to focus on delivering the policy objectives identified by College members, advocating on behalf of our members and the children you care for and supporting our Officers and Committees in the Nations to have real influence and impact.

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

There has been no impact on the number of staff working in Wales – we still have two full time roles in Wales, working within a structure that is broadly similar to the existing one. This is about increasing our influence and impact in the nations, whilst developing new ways of working in response to the needs of our staff and the changing environment. Having a strong staff presence in the nations is central to achieving the desired impact.

It does mean that existing staff in Wales - Gethin Matthews-Jones, Head of Policy and Public Affairs (Devolved Nations) and Lisa Roberts, Policy and Public Affairs Officer (Wales) - will get more support in a range of areas of College activity, (for example around event planning and training) so that the College overall can increase and improve what it offers to and for members in Wales.

When did these changes take place?

Staff in Wales were already working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic with no use of the physical office since March 2020. Thus the “physical office” closed at the end of November 2020.

Wider changes in ways of working for staff are also now in place. For example, we’re working more closely with colleagues across the College on important projects like the St David’s Day Conference (more on that below).

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

No, the aim is to increase this expertise and improve our response to devolved government, politics and health services. That will continue 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 across the College is the challenge ahead.

We've been working hard to build that into our ways of working across the organisation to be less England-centric and more responsive across the UK's four nations.

What’s the plan for the St David’s Day Conference in Wales?

The theme and content for our St David’s Day Conference has traditionally been led by trainees in Wales and hosted in Wales. This continues to be the case – it’s very much Welsh member-led.

The theme this year is the future of children and young people in a more equal and diverse world. It will be held virtually on 25 March 2021 and includes a keynote address from the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Professor Sally Holland. We’re excited about this so please [take a look at the event page and book your place](#).

What about the Welsh Paediatric Society and the relationship with the Royal College?

We have an agreement with the Welsh Paediatric Society detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding which has been in place for some time. RCPCH will continue to honour this. This will involve continuing to work closely with the WPS and being very much involved in activities that we know our members value highly, particularly the clinical meetings.

Members should continue to liaise with our staff in Wales, particularly Lisa Roberts, on WPS events, website and any other queries. The College’s commitment to delivering on the agreement won’t change and there are currently no plans to review the MoU.

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 have taken place in Education and Training structures, which offers scope for better coordination and information exchange between the E&T division and the Nations. There will be clearer opportunities for involvement of the National Officers in E&T activity, which will 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 Children & Young People's Engagement team continues to work with children and young people in all four of the UK's nations through the RCPCH &Us network. They inform all our thinking and outputs and have ring-fenced time for working in each of 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.