

Summary note of meeting - 7 October 2020

Attendees

GMC attendees:

Clare Marx (Chair); Charlie Massey; Nicola Cotter; Robert Khan; Paul Knight; Anthony Omo and Ian Somerville (notes).

External attendees:

Rosemary Agnew, SPSO; Dave Caesar, Scottish Government; Lynsey Cleland, HIS Community Engagement; Ken Donaldson, SAMD; Ian Finlay, Scottish Government; Alisdair Gilmour, BMA Scotland JDC; Graham Haddock, NES; Alastair Hurry, SATDC; John Paul Leach, SDMEG; Anthea Martin, MPS; Lynne Meekison, NES; Lucy Mulvagh, Health and Social Care Alliance; Donna O'Boyle, Scottish Government; Barry Parker, MDDUS; Robbie Pearson, HIS; Alison Smith, IHPN; Hugh Stewart, MDU; Vipin Zamvar and BAPIO Scotland.

Welcome and Chair's Introduction

- 1 The Chair welcomed attendees, including new members and Dave Caesar, congratulating him for being appointed as an Interim Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

Review of Actions from Previous meeting

- 2 The Head of GMC Scotland provided an update from the last meeting, covering:
 - Discussions on regulatory alignment at Scotland's Delivering Change Together event in February 2020 and an update on our work with fellow professional regulators to take forward plans for an emerging concerns protocol.
 - Progress developing a regulatory framework for Medical Associate Professionals.
 - Roundtables we held this year following our SAS and LED survey, discussing how we take forward work with our partners in response to the findings.
 - Our consideration of comments on language used when engaging with registrants. One of the areas of our draft corporate strategy is 'Every interaction matters.'

Chief Executive's Update

- 3 The GMC's Chief Executive provided reflections on the work taken forward during the COVID-19 pandemic, what we are focussing on now and what is coming up, noting:
 - We responded quickly, setting up the emergency register and bringing forward provisional registration. The functions we paused are now restarting in a safe way.
 - We are considering where we need to be in a post-pandemic world, including impacts on working environments and implications for education and training. We are pleased HIS colleagues have confirmed that we will restart conversations about how we share intelligence between regulators.
 - Uncertainty about the future of international migration makes retention of the existing workforce increasingly important.
 - The GMC has a continued need for legislative reform. This is now likely to happen.
 - We are publishing a new corporate strategy towards the end of this year. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion will be at its heart. There will be a commitment to be relevant and distinct in the countries in which we operate.

Covid-19 recovery, and opportunities to promote professionalism and wellbeing

External view

- 4 Dave Caesar presented on how the Scottish Government's new Leadership, Culture and Wellbeing Division is helping to support medical wellbeing. He outlined that work has been ongoing in the system for a number of years on approaches to compassionate leadership.
- 5 He said the Ministerial Short Life Working Group on Culture commissioned a report concluding that we need a grasp of where organisational structures influence culture change. COVID-19 has shown that those working in the system have become distant from NHS values. There is now an opportunity to surface this, forgive it, and consider improvements. There are three strands to the work – leadership, culture and staff wellbeing. He summarised the initiatives that have been put in place, including the establishment of wellbeing hubs and a wellbeing champions network.
- 6 They are trying to bring these strands together, many of which focus on inclusivity and equality and diversity. They need to work out a way of socialising them in a way that can be encouraged across the system, with measurable indicators. He concluded it is important to consider wellbeing now more than ever. This is a dangerous time of people already feeling tired and we are going into winter with a significant challenge.

GMC view

- 7 Anthony Omo then provided an update from the GMC. Anthony outlined two of his responsibilities: sponsoring the GMC's Supporting a Profession Under Pressure Programme, and its relationship with the Scottish Government.
- 8 He noted that in 2019 the GMC had published 3 independent reports with recommendations around fairness, wellbeing and support for healthcare professionals. GMC Scotland held an event in February 2020 where themes were agreed for work that we could collaborate on - leadership; collective workforce challenges, including induction; team-based working; and regulatory alignment.
- 9 He outlined that the GMC didn't want to create more work in these areas but consider what is already happening and how we can support it. He said the service has responded well to recent challenges and we understand many pre-pandemic challenges remain. We must prioritise how we support healthcare workers.
- 10 He summarised some things the GMC is doing to help the service, through guidance, the generic professional capabilities framework and joint projects between the Scotland team and partners. He welcomed initiatives in Scotland like the Workforce Specialist Service and the Race Equality Network. We are also working with BMA Scotland and the medical royal colleges in a new wellbeing stakeholder group.
- 11 He reminded attendees the service has always been under pressure and we can't wait for an appropriate time to act. He asked attendees to consider how we can do this and whether the themes we had previously identified are still relevant.

Discussion

- 12 Members discussed issues arising from the presentations. They reflected:
 - On challenges the profession had experienced throughout the pandemic. They acknowledged the impact had not just been on frontline healthcare workers, but also on management, many of whom are now exhausted. Members agreed that there did need to be a focus on wellbeing given the current and future challenges, but we should not forget that there was significant pressure before the pandemic.
 - That a lot of good had come from the work done to support the profession already, including the work that had resulted from the Sturrock report, and the *Caring for doctors, Caring for patients* report.
 - On the importance of data in supporting good working environments, particularly focusing on ED&I groups. The importance of intersectional analysis was noted.
 - On the impact of the pandemic on training progression. Whilst wellbeing is important for trainees, a practical understanding of what happens next was called for, including for workforce reasons as consultants continue to retire.

- On the relationship between more junior doctors and management, with a perceived gulf in communication. It was felt that consideration should be given to how juniors could be brought into decision making more.
- On the link between leadership and regulatory alignment. It was suggested that there is a divergence on what good leadership looks like, and that failures in leadership and motivation can be fractious. It was suggested the GMC, HIS and the Scottish Academy discuss how this can be aligned.
- It was urged that the GMC considers re-establishing its SAS group as part of its recovery planning. It was also noted that another consequence of derogation of training would be competition between trainees and SAS doctors for training opportunities. The importance of multi-disciplinary working and regulatory alignment was also stressed, particularly as MAPs become a regulated profession.

Chair's Summary

13 The chair provided a short summary of the discussion:

- The GMC recognise the importance of considering the impact of the pandemic on education and training, and will bring together senior leaders at a summit shortly.
- She recognised the challenges perpetuated by COVID-19. We have a role to play in encouraging local teams to share examples of what is going well, and welcome the chance to consider better professional and systems alignment on what good leadership looks like.
- The GMC's Chief Executive said there had been a striking description of the exhaustion that many in the system face, and we will consider what support we can offer. Our data can help identify what is going right or wrong with the BAME workforce (or elsewhere).

14 The next Scotland UKAF meeting will take place on 24 March 2021.