

## Response from the General Medical Council (GMC) to the Welsh Government's consultation considering future options for the NHS Wales bursary scheme

### About the GMC

We are the regulator of doctors, physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs).

We work with doctors, PAs and AAs, those they care for and other stakeholders to support good, safe patient care across the UK. Further information about how we do this can be found on our website under [Our mandate - GMC](#).

The GMC plays a vital role in UK medical education by setting standards, approving programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate), and quality assuring training for doctors, PAs, and AAs to ensure high-quality, safe patient care.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation and have restricted our comments to a small number of relevant themes.

### Our response

#### **Do you agree with this requirement to work in Wales after graduation?**

We do not take a position on whether the requirement should apply to medical students or whether they should continue to be exempt from the work-in-Wales requirement. However, we encourage Welsh Government to consider our data relating to trainees with a Welsh Primary Medical Qualification (PMQ) and where in the UK they undertake their Foundation Year 1 (FY1) training programme.

Between 2021 and 2025, there are more trainees who move to England to undertake their FY1 training programme than those who stay in Wales<sup>1</sup>. In 2021, 54% moved to England, with 43.4% remaining in Wales to do their FY1 training. The trend continues:

- 2022
  - 51.8% of trainees moved to England to do their FY1 training.

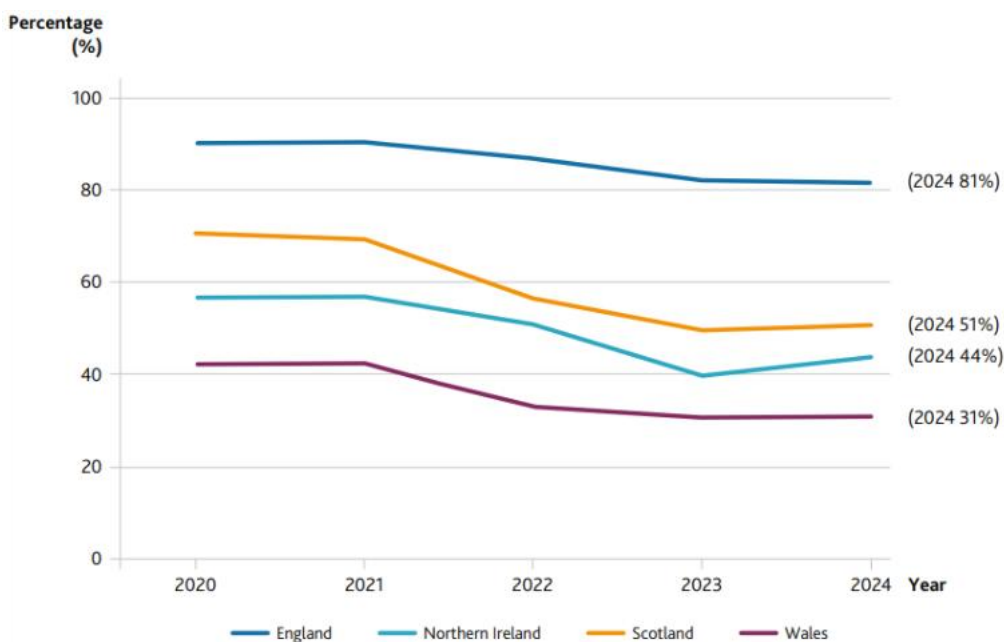
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<sup>1</sup> The data on trainee status has been obtained from the National Training Survey census.

- 44.8% stayed in Wales to do their FY1 training.
- 2023
  - 53.4% of trainees moved to England to do their FY1 training.
  - 40.1% stayed in Wales to do their FY1 training.
- 2024
  - 48.8% of trainees moved to England to do their FY1 training.
  - 47.6% stayed in Wales to do their FY1 training.
- 2025
  - 48.6% of trainees moved to England to do their FY1 training.
  - 47.2% stayed in Wales to do their training.

This data shows that between 2021 and 2025, the gap is narrowing between the number of trainees with a Welsh PMQ who choose to undertake their FY1 training programme in England and those who choose to remain in Wales.

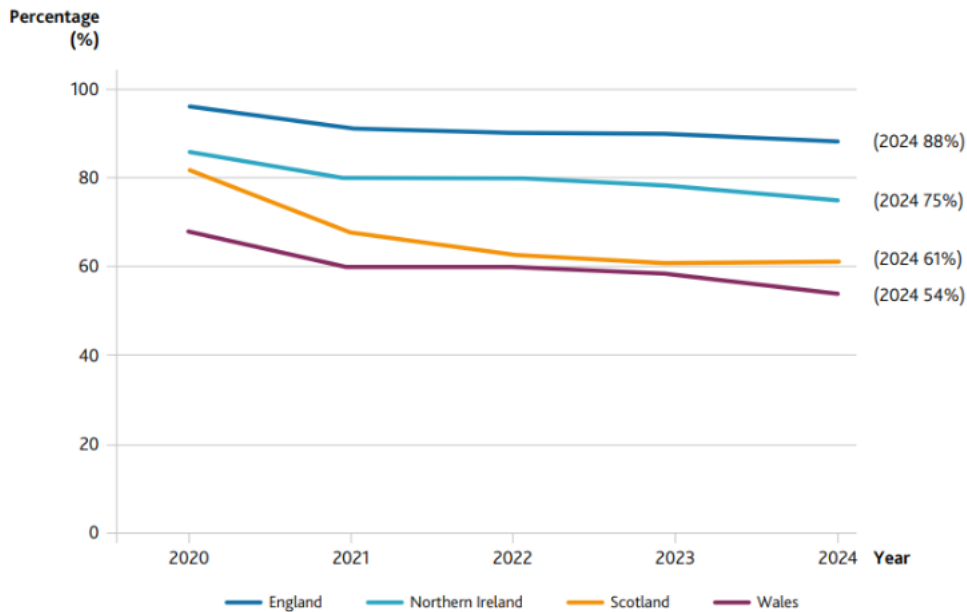
Our latest [State of Medical Education and Practise in the UK: Workforce report](#) also highlights that significant proportions of doctors leave Wales after graduation to take up their first foundation post, with 31% of graduates from Welsh medical schools still working in Wales five years later<sup>2</sup>.



Fewer doctors leave Wales when they complete F2 compared to movement after medical school, but Wales still loses close to half of its F2 doctors within five years. In 2024, 54% of doctors who'd completed F2 in 2019 in Wales were still working there.

<sup>2</sup> 81% of graduates were still working in England, 51% of graduates still working in Scotland, and 44% of graduates still working in Northern Ireland.

Figure 27: Proportion of doctors in F2 in 2019 remaining licensed and in the same country, 2020–2024



Fewer doctors leave Wales when they complete speciality training, as by 2024, Wales had kept 84% of the doctors who'd attained a CCT in Wales in 2020.

Given there is often competition for postgraduate training places, there may be scenarios where a trainee who is a recipient of the bursary needs to access training opportunities outside Wales due to the availability of training and experience. It would be important to ensure those trainees are not disadvantaged as a result.

We encourage Welsh Government to consider how a situation would be managed where a graduate has received a bursary but fails to secure a postgraduate training place through national recruitment, and how this would be communicated to medical students and graduates.

We recognise the focus by UK governments on developing 'homegrown' talent and the desire to build a more self-sufficient NHS workforce. While we do not, as a regulator, take a view on the prioritisation of UK graduates, we would encourage conversations and collaboration on four-country working to understand areas of alignment, given that the Medical Training (Prioritisation) Bill is going through UK parliament at the time of writing.

20 January 2026

