Executive summary
This paper reports on the latest discussions at the UK Advisory Forums, which took place in October in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. The summary provided details the areas of interest or concern raised by UK Advisory Forum members, an update on our priority programmes, local agenda items discussed at each meeting, and an update on our work on using the data we have to protect patients and support high standards of medical education and practise.

Recommendation
The Strategy and Policy Board is asked to note the summary report.
Meetings of the UK Advisory Forums October 2015

1. The UKAF meetings were held in Edinburgh on 1 October, in Cardiff on 8 October and Belfast on 13 October 2015.

2. At each meeting the Chair reflected on the positive feedback received in response to the spring meetings and restated our commitment to working as a four country regulator. The Chair also reiterated the purpose of these Fora which is to allow the GMC to understand the context in which the GMC is working and how that should impact our strategy, operations and policy making.

Update on local priorities/areas of interest or concern from Forum members

3. The Forums considered local priorities and areas of concern or interest. In Scotland, the Forum’s discussion focussed on:

   a. Updates from NHS Education Scotland in relation to changes to its senior management team and progress on the implementation of its integrated IT system.
   
   b. Health Improvement Scotland’s publication of its annual review of revalidation in Scotland and its Memorandum of Understanding with the GMC.
   
   c. Issues around the confidentiality of patient information within the NHS and sharing patient details with non-healthcare organisations.
   
   d. Workforce issues, including challenges to recruit into and retain various specialties, the strain on postgraduate medical education training and the interest and impact in Scotland of the junior doctor contract discussions in England.

4. In Wales, the Forum discussed:

   a. How the GMC can communicate positively with the profession to encourage excellence and reflect on the tone of its operational communications and some online processes.
   
   b. An increase in complaints related to doctors’ general communication skills reported to the Board of Community Health Councils.
   
   c. The publication of the BMA Cymru Wales survey on raising concerns in the workplace.
   
   d. NHS Confederation plans to adapt its 2015 Challenge for NHS Wales document in preparation for the 2016 Assembly elections.
5 In Northern Ireland, the Forum discussed:

a The successful implementation and operation of revalidation and the current independent evaluation.

b The importance of the Foundation Programme and of making training programmes attractive to doctors in training so that they see the benefit of being in a training programme.

c GMC processes in managing Revalidation recommendations and the tone of revalidation reminder communications to doctors.

d Workforce planning and concerns related to any potential impact on trainee numbers as a result of the ongoing debate on junior doctors’ contracts, and the need to increase GP numbers to avert capacity issues in the next five years.

e Systems issues impacting patients, including waiting time and length of consultations.

GMC Update

6 The Forums received updates on key areas of our work, including the UK Medical Licensing Assessment (UKMLA), the possibility of moving the point of registration and the Professional Accountability Bill.

7 The Forums noted:

a Continued support from the Governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for the progression of the Professional Accountability Bill noting that the GMC was limited in its ability to reform significantly further without new legislation.

b Concerns around the proposal by the UK Government to move the point of registration to the end of medical school, including potentially losing the support currently offered to doctors during the provisional registration year in the Foundation Programme if not all doctors secured a place; and the impact on graduate entry programme degrees which would become non-compliant with EU and therefore UK law.

c On-going development of the proposed UKMLA and the need to harness the support of the four governments of the UK prior to seeking the legislative changes required to introduce the assessment.
Country specific items

8 The Forums considered updates from a key partner in each of the respective countries.

9 In Scotland the Forum discussed the summary of Healthcare Improvement Scotland’s consultation on Quality of Care Reviews. The Forum noted that HIS has scrutinising and report producing functions but no improvement or enforcement powers but that joint working with the Care Inspectorate could add value with the integration of health and social care in Scotland, for example joint inspection teams or joint commissioning. HIS expressed confidence in relation to the indicators on doctors in training provided by the GMC and the quality of care associated with that, and was becoming more confident and open in terms of sharing intelligence, including soft intelligence.

10 In Wales the Forum discussed the Welsh Government Health Professional Education Investment Review of the planning, development and commissioning of health professional education and workforce development in Wales. The Forum noted that a Task and Finish group would be formed and that there were concerns regarding the low percentage of Welsh domiciled students studying medicine in Wales and the resulting impact on retention of graduates.

11 In Northern Ireland the Forum discussed an update on the Regulation and Quality Improvement’s (RQIA) three year review programme. The Forum noted the impact of RQIA reviews on the improvement of infection compliance levels in HSC Trusts, and the importance of prioritising report recommendations to assist with ensuring that all recommendations were implemented fully. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety was increasingly using RQIA reports as part of its accountability meetings. The work of the joint GMC RQIA Clinical Fellow was noted in the context of the RQIA’s inspection work and assurances on how concerns identified in the course of a provider visit would be shared with relevant partner organisations including the GMC.

Using the data we have on doctors to minimise risk to patients

12 The Forums received a presentation on our work to use the data we hold to improve our regulatory functions, assure standards of medical education and practise, and inform/support the work of Forum members.

13 The Forums noted support for the proposed developments to make better use of our data, subject to the need to sensitively consider the issue of data protection and confidentiality.
Next meeting

14 The next meeting of the UK Advisory Forums will take place in Belfast on 3 March, in Cardiff on 9 March and in Edinburgh on 14 March 2016.

15 The actions arising from the autumn meetings will be regularly monitored as part of our internal planning arrangements for the 2016 meetings.