

STW GP NEWSLETTER

MEET A LOCAL
GP

WHAT'S NEW IN
GENERAL PRACTICE

NETWORKS FOR
ALL GPs



GP TRAINEE SURVEY

The ICB recently conducted a survey of GPs due to qualify this summer. The survey aimed to identify the support and development needs of this important cohort of doctors, with the results being used to make the case for funding to address the identified needs. This initiative is particularly important as the long-standing GP Fellowship scheme, providing two years' post-CCT support to newly-qualified GPs, has now ended.

The survey was completed by 28 GPs (over 50% return rate) with the main findings being: a large majority are planning to stay in STW and to apply for a salaried role (or a mix of a salaried role and working as a locum). Notably, none expressed an intention to pursue a GP partnership role post-CCT. Given that a majority of doctors on the STW VTS are IMGs, it was not surprising that just over 50% of respondents are on Skilled Worker visas, with most requiring support with post-CCT visa sponsorship. Around half of all respondents are not confident about how to find work as a GP in STW and nearly all would be interested in a speed dating event, if available.

Nearly all respondents said that they would be interested in one or more of the following: training/Support on becoming a GP Partner, mentoring, developing Leadership Skills, developing an understanding of Quality Improvement, and training/information on how to work as a GP Locum. Information on any funded schemes will be communicated to newly-qualified GPs via the STW First 5 GP Network.





GP FLEXIBLE CAREER PATHWAY

MEET DR RACHEL SISSONS GP MARKETING LEAD STW ICB

I took on the role of GP Marketing Lead for STW ICB in April 2023, and it is fair to say that I get more than a few raised eyebrows when I mention this job title. General Practice has been experiencing a series of threats and challenges in recent years; and it has been at times a challenge for me to 'sell' the benefits of a career as a GP. It's always been true that to a young prospective medical student, 'Grey's Anatomy' seems more appealing than 'Doctors' as it's more exciting, high octane and attractive. I have often used my own story when talking about career options with students and trainees, to explain why I believe that being a doctor, and GP, is a fantastic career choice.

My parents are both doctors, one a Consultant Pathologist and the other a medic who chose a role outside of the NHS to support family life with three children. I grew up outside Blackpool in Lancashire and went to Downing College, Cambridge to study medicine. It was definitely a significant culture shock for me when I first arrived in Cambridge, but equally an amazing opportunity and life experience. I moved up to Manchester for my clinical medicine after receiving a BA 2:1 in Medical Sciences from Cambridge. I had the unique experience of PBL learning for my clinical medicine, combined with the vastly different didactic approach I had experienced for three years at Cambridge. I also completed my foundation and GP training posts in South Manchester and Salford and experienced a wide range of hospitals and patient demographics during my training years.

Since moving to Shrewsbury in 2014 I have worked as a GP in Telford, Shrewsbury and wider Shropshire. I started out working full time in my first GP Partner role and changed to part time in my second GP Partner role. I have had leadership roles, training roles and various levels of management responsibility. In 2023 I started a portfolio career, this involves locum GP sessions, working for the ICB in two roles, and working for the West Midlands Research Delivery Network as a Research Delivery GP. I love the variety of opportunity and incredible flexibility that being a GP has afforded me. I also feel excited for the future that there are more opportunities ahead to develop my skills and experience and to adapt my work/life balance as required.

Outside of work, I spent my younger years playing lots of hockey, at university and for a national league hockey team. I absolutely loved playing hockey and had some fantastic experiences which included gaining two Cambridge blues. I was also really lucky to meet my future wife Louise when I moved to Manchester in 2005. We had no idea when we met then how much things would progress in 20 years. We were able to legally marry in 2014 and now have two lovely children who are 9 and 6. We moved from Manchester to Shrewsbury soon after our wedding and just as I qualified as a GP. It was a daunting move for me as a newly qualified GP at the time, but one that I have never regretted.

Most of my family and friends are still based in the North West and we are frequently asked about moving back. My wife and I have been very happy with our move to Shropshire; the green space is amazing and peaceful, the towns vibrant and welcoming, and the people have been open and warm. The family life we have with our children is incredible and we really value it.

So, despite the challenging times, I still wholeheartedly believe that choosing to be a GP is the best decision I could have made and alongside that living in Shropshire. It is with this enthusiasm for our profession and our local area that I continue to embrace my GP Marketing Lead role.



NEW FREE GP LOCUM BOOKING PLATFORM

This is now up and running!

It's a platform on the SSGPN (locum group) web page. Practices post their jobs (for free) and an email is sent to all the locums on the locum list who then can apply for the posted job. The practice chooses who they accept and then the other applicants are declined (if multiple). Payments and terms are kept between the practice and locum GP.

The locum group is now upto 73 GPs, they can join for free!

As it's a new project we would very much appreciate any good and bad feedback on any aspect of the system or process!

Please contact info@ssgpn.org.uk to join the locum list or create an account to use the platform as a practice!



Diary Dates:

25/07/25: Learning from Cautionary tales - Webinar

26/09/25: Dealing with Challenging Consultations- Webinar

14th August 19.00: Dr Moulik + Dinner at Yak + Yeti.

Locum Group BLS Friday 12/09/25
09.30 Atcham Village Hall.

For all events Email [Serena](mailto:Serena@ssgpn.org.uk) for further information and to book.

First 5 Network

Has been developed to create a community for, and to provide support to, early year GPs in the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin localities, regardless of where you have trained, what role you currently have, or what your plans are for the future. We want to support you in your continuing professional development, feel at home in the local area, and know where to turn for guidance. We achieve this through educational and networking events, online and in person social groups, linking you up with local employers, and being a point of contact for any concerns you may have. If you are within your first 5 years of CCT, working in STW as a GP, and wish to join, we would love to hear from you by [emailing](#)

Wise 5 Network

For all our 'wiser' GPs, those within 5 years of possible retirement/ leaving the profession (we won't hold you to that) - a group to share problems and access to educational and support events. If you would like to join this group, please [email](#).

Locum Network

For anyone that does regular or ad hoc locum sessions in STW. The locum list is regularly shared with the local practices. It also offers training, case discussions and networking.

Meetings this year will include BLS, safeguarding, case discussions and networking events. [Email](#) if you would like to join.

Mid GP Network

A brand new network group for those of you who are no longer a First 5 nor yet a Wise 5! A group for support, education and networking.

If you would like to join this group please [email](#).

GP PARTNERS SURVEY

There has been a 30% reduction in GP Partner numbers over the past 10 years across STW. In response to this the ICB recently carried out a survey of practices on the Partnership role/model. A key finding is that nearly a quarter of current GP Partners who responded are planning to leave or retire within five years. This, linked with many practices stating that they are struggling to replace departing GP Partners, clearly indicates that the stability of Primary Care across STW may be at risk.

Some of the key findings from the survey were:

- Few practices are confident in their ability to replace departing GP Partners with new Partners
- Consequently many practices are choosing to recruit salaried GPs instead, often resulting in a higher workload for the remaining GP Partners, with administrative and HR burdens being a major concern
- In addition, rising operational costs make GP Partnership less financially viable as a career choice – e.g. the current premises ownership models discourage GPs from taking on partnership roles.
- Some respondents said that a barrier to recruitment of Partners is that practices are not able to afford the remuneration that some GPs would be looking for as a Partner
- Few practices have a structured succession plan with most Partner recruitment occurring on an ad hoc basis.
- A key barrier to forward/succession planning, mentioned by a few respondents, is that some GP Partners are uncertain about their own retirement plans.
- Some practices are addressing the shortage of GP Partners by creating managing Partners, often with existing/previous Practice Managers.
- Many GP Partner respondents feel undervalued, with a perception that Primary Care is not given sufficient priority within the NHS system.
- Finally, some respondents said that the General Practice Vocational Training Scheme (VTS) is not adequately preparing trainees for the realities of being a Partner (see the article on the VTS survey)

The ICB is aware of the above issues and a funding bid has been submitted to address them.



FINANCE

We recently held a series of talks with Wesleyan. Thank you to those who attended, they have said any feedback is warmly received. Our local advisor Chris is happy to offer FREE one to one advice with no obligations to purchase. You can contact him [here](#).

Highlights, as provided by Chris: **NB, please ensure you get independent advice before making any financial decisions.**

The following information is purely illustrative of the information that Wesleyan (or other providers) can provide

- Ensuring you nominate your beneficiaries for your NHS Pension
- Annual allowance is currently £60k tax free for pensions.
- Of females retiring at 60 6.2% make it too 100
- Of males retiring at 60 3.5% make it to 100
- Adding additional money to pension- you can add £250 blocks per year to max of £8k per year (over £6500 needs to be requested via nhs pensions) and for 'Added years' - no new ones after April 2028 ok to continue if already set up.
- When purchasing income protection always go for options choosing own profession not any profession and check what illnesses trigger it.
- Pensions are to be added to your estate for Inheritance tax by 2027.

Inheritance:

Avoiding inheritance tax- can give away £3/yr tax free or if more you need to live 7 years or tax is applied on a sliding scale. Regular payments to anyone are ok rather than lump sums.

Can pay money into trust funds.

Loan trusts- you can access your money at any point. As money grows it's growth outside of your estate.





LOCUM SURVEY

A recent survey of GP locums across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin has revealed a significant shortfall in available work. Of the 68 locums contacted, the majority reported that they were unable to secure sufficient sessions to meet their desired workload. Many have sought alternative employment outside the NHS, and very few are open to salaried or partnership roles. Worryingly, most respondents have considered leaving the NHS altogether, citing reasons such as early retirement, emigration, or transitioning to the private sector.

This survey underscores a mismatch between available locum GP opportunities and workforce expectations. The reluctance toward salaried or partnership roles suggests that alternative working models may be necessary to retain locums within the NHS. Furthermore, the risk of experienced clinicians exiting the system altogether is a pressing concern.

These findings indicate a potential workforce retention risk and highlight the need for urgent strategic review of how locum GPs are integrated into the wider workforce model.

The STW GP Recruitment and Retention lead, Dr Serena Jones, is liaising with colleagues holding similar roles in neighbouring ICBs to see if a similar survey could be carried out over a larger area.

In the meantime STW ICB is considering how it might support this important cohort of GPs.

Key contacts for GPs in STW:

- Recruitment and Retention Lead: Dr Serena Jones stw.gprecruitmentandretentionlead@nhs.net
- Marketing Lead: Dr Rachel Sissons stw.gpmarketinglead@nhs.net
- GP Trainee Differential Attainment Leads (role share): Dr Rachael Hayhurst rachaelhayhurst@nhs.net & Dr Gideon Eyitemi gideon.eyitemi@nhs.net
- Education Leads: Dr Melanie Thompson melanie.thompson20@nhs.net and Dr Damien Thompson damien.thompson@nhs.net
- Mentor Leads: Dr Melanie Thompson melanie.thompson20@nhs.net and Dr Rachel Taylor rachel.taylor3@nhs.net
- GP Fellowship Clinical Lead: Dr Priya George priya.george4@nhs.net
- GP First 5 Network Lead: Dr Helen Lloyd stw.first5@nhs.net
- STW ICB Primary Care Workforce Lead: Phil Morgan philip.morgan3@nhs.net

