

# **Isle of Islay - Rural Fellowship Prospectus**

## **2024 – 2025**

We would love to welcome a Rural Fellow to join our healthcare team on the beautiful island of Islay. We have been part of the Rural Fellowship programme since 2015 with 5 previous Rural Fellows, all of whom have enjoyed all aspects of their time living and working on Islay.



### **Where is Islay?**



Islay is the most southerly of the Hebridean Islands and enjoys excellent ferry and air links to the mainland and to Glasgow. There are up to 5 daily return ferry crossings from Kennacraig or Oban on the west coast of Argyll and direct flights daily from Glasgow airport. Islay enjoys the best of both worlds feeling remote and unspoiled but is just 25 minutes by plane from Glasgow with excellent onward connections to the UK and the world.

## Islay - The Queen of the Hebrides

Islay, the ancient seat of the Lords of the Isles, is one of the larger islands of the Inner Hebrides with a population of around 3500 people, increasing to 10000 in the busy summer months. It has beautiful low lying fertile farmland and woodlands plus stunning west coast beaches and spectacular cliffs. There are 9 world famous whisky distilleries to choose from if you enjoy a dram and amazing wildlife on show particularly in the 2 RSPB reserves - 90% of the worlds population of Greenland Barnacle geese winter over on Islay - a spectacular sight! Bowmore is the main town right in the centre of the Island, shops, banks, pubs, takeaways and everything else you might need including a swimming pool and gym.



## **Medical Services on the Islands**

GP services on Islay have successfully come together over the last few years to form Islay Medical Practice - with a full complement of enthusiastic and friendly GPs and first class support services. There are 3 GP surgeries on the island in Bowmore, Port Charlotte and Port Ellen. There is a small, but essential, 6 bedded Community Hospital and A+E department in Bowmore, which is also run by the GPs. The OOH cover for the hospital and practices is run by the GPs, on a rota basis, with NHS 24 as the first contact.

The GPs are supported by a great team of primary care nursing and healthcare assistants including an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, practice nurses, Diabetes Specialist Nurse, healthcare assistants and dispensers.

In terms of delivery of the Primary Care Improvement Plan, patients are currently able to access a first contact physiotherapist, community link workers, a clinical pharmacist and pharmacy technician. It is anticipated that residents will also have access to a Welfare Rights Officer in the very near future.

Islay Medical Practice has recently been accredited by the Ministry of Defence Deanery as an innovative teaching practice. Trainees spend three-months with the practice, during their ST2 or ST3 years. The first trainee commenced their training on Islay in February 2023.

We are proud of our extended clinical team and the compassion, cooperation and teamwork that facilitate us in providing excellent care for the patients of Islay.

If teaching is an interest we have close links with the major teaching hospitals in Glasgow and regularly accommodate students from the Universities of Glasgow, Dundee, UCL as well as elective students from all over the country.



## **The Role of the Rural Fellow**

We would like our Rural Fellow to experience the variety, interest and satisfaction of remote General Practice! It is a great opportunity to gain experience and confidence in the provision of daytime GMS services, community hospital inpatient care and the management of patients in a remote Emergency Department.

### **The details...**

You will be mentored by Dr Matthew Jackson throughout the year and initially work with him to tailor the programme to your own learning needs and experience.

You will be based on Islay and spend around 7 sessions per week working between the practice and Islay Hospital, with 3 sessions set aside for admin, personal development and teaching.

The rural fellowship programme is an excellent opportunity to access lots of quality off-island training that is easily accessible as you are in a supernumerary role.

You will be supported to provide some OOH care as this is an essential and exciting part of the job of a remote and rural GP. This will be with full clinical backup and will be paid additionally to the fellowship salary - you won't be thrown in the deep end or left to work alone unless you are confident to do so – there will always be friendly help at hand!



There are normally opportunities to take part in on island training exercises through the year with our colleagues in the ambulance service, the lifeboat and the coastguard.

If you are interested in the Islay Rural Fellowship and would like more information, or to arrange a visit, please contact our Practice Manager, Alan Beresford.

**[alan.beresford@nhs.scot](mailto:alan.beresford@nhs.scot)**

**01496 305 305**

<https://www.islaymedicalservices.com/>

## Don't just take our word for it....

### **Dr Philippa Donnelly, GP Rural Fellow 2023/2024:**

*"I am 9 months into the Islay Rural Fellowship, and I would highly recommend! Islay is a stunning place to live, and I have not been short of visitors since moving here! It is a really good example of medical rurality but in terms of accessibility and ability to return to the mainland, you can be in Glasgow with either a 30-minute flight or a two-hour ferry plus 2.5 hour drive.*

*Work wise I was intimidated by the idea of doing on calls – this is when you cover the hospital/ A&E department for a 24-hour period. However, this has by far been the most rewarding part of this job. I love being a GP but I enjoy how this job breaks up your week with a mixture of GP clinical sessions and acute medicine at the hospital. Having said this, I have been incredibly well supported and have known that I have people at the end of the phone to call if ever I felt overwhelmed. Having shared experiences with other rural fellows I do feel that the balance of Acute Medicine and out of hours work: GP sessions, has been much more what I was looking for from the job.*

*My partner works on the mainland and so I have lived here mostly on my own, but I have always felt welcomed into the community and there is plenty to do and see on Islay. There are sports clubs, plenty of places to wild swim, see wildlife, enjoy beautiful scenery, walks, plus A LOT of whisky distilleries.*

*The fellowship itself has a large amount of study leave and funding for education and development. I feel I have really progressed during this year and having qualified 2 years previous, this year I have developed as a GP so much more than my previous role. Having shared experiences with other rural fellows in other areas, I think Islay has offered me the ideal ratio of out of hours (more acute medicine) to GP sessions.*

*Overall, this is a great opportunity, and I am so glad I chose Islay."*

### **Dr Kate Coombes, GP Rural Fellow, 2022-23:**

*"I have to admit, prior to applying for the rural fellowship, I had embarrassingly never heard of Islay. Yes, I had seen the island on many weather forecasts, usually with heavy rain predicted. So how did I end up on Islay? When looking at the options for the rural fellowship, I was keen to go to one of the islands. My partner required to get back to Newcastle frequently for work, so following a bit of googling the flight between Islay and Glasgow made this option the most convenient. I was promptly put in contact with the practice manager. He took the time to ring me and kindly arranged a visit to meet the team – I was sold.*

*Islay is stunningly beautiful with so many gorgeous beaches. For those who require a few hills, the Paps of Jura are not too far away. If you are into wild swimming, paddleboarding, cycling, hiking, running then you are spoilt for options, as long as you are willing to brave the slightly windy days. There is an abundance of wildlife too, on average I see one white tailed eagle a week!*

*The job is a great mix of GP, A+E and community hospital work. Islay Medical Services works across three primary care sites on the island. The fellow is based at one of these sites for the majority of the time, though occasionally will go to another site. The team are incredibly friendly, welcoming and supportive. I certainly do not feel like a locum filling in the gaps. I was worried initially with being out of my depth on my on-call shifts, but you have a second on call and are very well supported by the other GPs. The variety of presentations and clinical cases you get involved in is far more than I had in my previous city GP practices. Also, the amount of study leave and funding you get to attend courses is invaluable for your personal and clinical development.*

*I would highly recommend applying for the rural fellowship, and of course choosing to come to Islay. Yes, it can be busy and challenging at times, but is an incredibly interesting and rewarding job. There is the additional perk of experiencing living in such a beautiful part of the world where you get langoustines delivered to your door, what more do you want?"*

**Dr Alex Dean, GP Rural Fellow, 2019-2020**

*"The Islay and Jura fellowship has quite simply been the best job I've ever done. When I was thinking of applying to the fellowship I thought that I should go and visit one of the places that offers it. With a couple of quick emails I had sorted out a visit to meet the team here on Islay and I was sold shortly after getting off the boat. Islay and Jura are beautiful, the locals very friendly and the healthcare team here are close knit and supportive.*

*The job is a great mix of general practice and acute care. The thing that I found daunting about the job was the A&E work and not knowing what was going to come through the door. However the GPs here are very supportive and are always on hand for backup when you need it. The opportunities you get from the huge amount of study leave time and course funding is invaluable in getting you to enhance or reinforce skills. During in hours work you certainly have more time to spend with patients and it makes the day much more enjoyable than working on the mainland when it can feel like a rush to get everything done on time.*

*The islands are great for outdoor enthusiasts with stunning beaches, hills to roam across and loads of coastline to kayak/paddleboard/row around. For a small island too there's surprisingly a lot of places to go out to eat, pubs, music events and of course distilleries too. Wherever you're thinking of applying to the fellowship I'd encourage you to go and meet the team – I'm sure you'll be sold on it as quickly as I was."*

**Dr Jess Cooper, GP Rural Fellow, 2016-17**

*"Having never really heard of Islay until looking through these very adverts this time last year, I have to say, I have totally landed on my feet. I chose to apply for the rural fellowship for a little bit of an adventure, a way to build a wider skill base and get to spend time at the beach, these were my main criteria in choosing a place for the fellowship. I have to say that each of these criteria have been fulfilled. There are beaches, so many beaches. And I have discovered that beaches are best tackled wearing wellies, always. In fact, most places on Islay are best in wellies.*

*Workwise, I am definitely learning lots, and building skill in a number of areas. In the last week alone I did a ring block for the first time for a lady with a crush injury to her hand, sutured a couple of heads, dealt with a potential pre-eclampsia and got involved with 2 different child protection cases. Never a dull moment. On Islay I am getting a real variety of day-to-day General Practice, and also out of hours, community hospital and A&E experience. The team and the workload are well integrated so I feel the balance of these different aspects of practice is good. As much as I am learning new things and increasing in confidence in managing acute problems, I feel I am getting stuck into daily practice and gaining in experience there too. My average week is generally 7 sessions but varies as needed to find study leave in, and that is usually made up of maybe 5-6 sessions of surgeries at my base practice and one other practice, and then 1-2 sessions covering the community hospital and A&E and then on average one overnight on call.*

*I have been very well supported starting out doing oncalls here, with the GPs taking their turn to be a second oncall for me if needed to help as I built confidence especially with the acute care aspect and as I learnt to think through decisions around transfer off the island. I had initially been concerned about working in the three practices across the island, that I would feel like I was filling in or a locum, but I was pleased to find that I don't feel this way at all, the GPs and wider staff team have made a real effort to help me feel fully included and Islay Medical Services are trying hard to make the three practices essentially function as one, with staff and computer systems in the process of integrating. Watching as the team looks to service planning and seeing their creativity thinking forward to the future of medical services here is really pretty inspiring, and makes me sure that I am working alongside a team that really care for their community and are really striving to see change and improvement.*

*Someone once told me to always surround yourself with people you respect and this is easily achieved with the Islay Medical Services team. It has always been straightforward to organize time for off island training/courses etc, which means I have been able to take up of all the opportunities afforded by the fellowship, and never felt that I am causing inconvenience or won't be able to get the time needed to do these things. My education is valued and encouraged here which is great. I would really highly recommend the Islay and Jura fellowship if you are looking to work hard, learn lots, be challenged and inspired to become a better clinician, in a supportive and educational environment. And most importantly, if you want go to the beach."*