Building sustainable remote, rural and island health and care services and workforce

The National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care’s programmes and targets for phase 1 (2024/2025) relate to Scottish Government strategic priorities and its [Programme for Government](https://www.gov.scot/programme-for-government/) (PfG).

Strategic priorities

1. Reducing health inequalities
2. Supporting a sustainable workforce
3. Improving service user access
4. Building primary care data and intelligence
5. Enhanced multi-disciplinary team working

In the past 12 months NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and the National Centre have initiated over 30 projects. These are across the four pillars of work and will support government priorities and deliver measurable improvements and outcomes.

**The Remote and Rural Series of Learning Events 2024/25**

This is a programme of online learning for health and care staff in remote, rural and island primary and community care. Two sessions per month take place with the aim of increasing access to continuous professional development opportunities that support the delivery of primary care services.

**The Rural Advanced Practice (RAP) MSc programme**

This MSc programme, which NES delivers in partnership with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), is for multi-disciplinary Advanced Practitioners working in rural communities. It offers health professionals a new route to gain the knowledge, skills and capabilities to become Rural Advanced Practitioners (RAPs) in remote and rural care.

RAPs are extended generalists who often work autonomously and collaboratively to provide care and address health inequalities. They work as part of the multi-disciplinary team of colleagues, both local and distant, to provide services aligned to community needs.

The RAP education programme provides a career pathway for practitioners living and working in rural communities. It supports them in providing services across the age spectrum in the community, GP Practices and out-of-hours settings. The RAP MSc programme is the first of its kind in Scotland and delivers education that will help support the efforts of remote, rural and island boards to attract, recruit and retain healthcare professionals. 15 rural practitioners have been funded to study the MSc programme in 2023 and a further 12 practitioners were funded and started their studies in September 2024.

**Building Rural-Urban Healthcare Equity for Scotland (BRUCES)**

A multi-methods research programme into cancer, musculoskeletal health and frailty, BRUCES aims to understand how and why health and healthcare for people living in different types of rural communities differs from those living in urban areas, and how we can improve it.

BRUCES project funding is by the Chief Scientist’s Office under the Applied Health Research Programme. It is led by Prof. Peter Murchie and Prof. Rosemary Hollick at the University of Aberdeen. The National Centre is a member of the project steering group and we will work closely with the academic team to disseminate and implement the findings.

This project will bring together learning from the ongoing research using large healthcare datasets to develop a detailed, rural-focused understanding of the health of people with cancer, musculoskeletal conditions, or frailty and how they use health services.

All National Centre projects rely on effective engagement with local, regional and national stakeholders. Through our stakeholder networks we gain a better understanding of the issues and needs. With this knowledge we are then able to collaborate to develop, test, refine and implement sustainable solutions that offer improved health and care in remote, rural and island communities.

Visit [Education and Training Programmes 2024-2025 | Turas | Learn](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/77632) to find out more

Or contact [nes.ruralteam@nhs.scot](mailto:nes.ruralteam@nhs.scot)