**News article – Research and Evaluation**

**Development funding awards**

Research and evaluation play a critical role in supporting rural health practitioners by providing data-driven insights that help them adapt to challenges, refine their practices, and improve patient care. By leveraging these tools, rural clinicians can develop more effective strategies, respond to community-specific health needs, and ultimately enhance service quality and outcomes.

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) has several Programmes underway to increase capacity and the opportunity to undertake research and evaluation within the remote, rural and island primary care and community services workforce within Scotland.

When rural clinicians themselves undertake research, it brings benefits to both the healthcare system and the communities they serve. These practitioners have firsthand knowledge of the challenges, nuances, and specific needs of rural healthcare, allowing them to frame research questions that are highly relevant and context-specific. By conducting research, they contribute to an evidence base that is rooted in real-world experience, ensuring that findings are practical and applicable to rural practice. This practitioner-led approach enhances the credibility and adoption of research outcomes, empowers clinicians with advanced skills in analysis and problem-solving, and fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation within rural healthcare.

Our Remote and Rural Primary Care Research and Evaluation [awards scheme](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/73843) allows remote, rural and island primary care practitioners to apply for National Centre funding to cover the costs of academic study, research, evaluation or peer reviewed publication costs relating to work that strengthens the rural health evidence base for Scotland.

Our awards scheme signifies our commitment to empowering rural healthcare practitioners and fostering evidence-based advancements in rural healthcare practice. These awards are part of the Centre’s dedication to reducing health inequalities and strengthening rural health services.

Through the award scheme, the National Centre aims to support an increase in the amount of remote, rural and island relevant research and evaluation that remote, rural and island primary care practitioners within Scotland undertake. This will produce knowledge, learning and tools that can support improvement and good practice within remote, rural and island healthcare.

So far, we have made five awards, totalling approximately £30,000, supporting rural health postgraduate study and the personal development of rural practitioners from NHS Ayrshire and Aran, NHS Tayside, NHS Shetland, NHS Borders and NHS Highland.

This includes awards to:

1. A music therapist based in Ayrshire and Arran to undertake a master’s degree in healthcare management. Through the research component of the course, they will explore themes around the challenges in supporting the Allied Health Professionals (AHP) workforce in rural areas and the role of organisational leadership in that support.
2. A Lead Advanced Nurse Practitioner from Perth and Kinross to commence doctoral studies. The professional doctorate will build on this practitioner’s master’s work on the impact of Advanced Nurse Practitioner led Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment (CGA) underpinning the values of person-centred care. Incorporating nurse-led CGA has been justified within urban primary care settings, proving effectiveness and improved patient outcomes. However this has not previously been established or evaluated within rural and remote areas.
3. A Specialist Orthodontist from Shetland towards their ongoing PhD studies researching the impact of orthodontics as a specialty on the climate crisis. The research is looking at the carbon footprint of patients undergoing orthodontic treatment in Shetland with factors such as travel to and from clinics having a potentially greater impact than urban equivalents.

The Centre will also provide professional and pastoral support throughout their studies and assist with sharing the research findings and outputs to relevant audiences.

These awards are designed to not only support individual growth, but also to build capacity in the rural healthcare system by promoting evidence-based improvements and innovative solutions tailored to rural challenges. The scheme exemplifies our mission to enhance the sustainability and resilience of rural healthcare through dedicated research and professional development.

We believe that the outputs, outcomes and wider impacts from these awards will contribute to the larger goal of improving patient outcomes and fostering a strong, well-supported rural healthcare workforce.

For full details of the Awards scheme which is currently open until March 2025, visit [Remote and Rural Primary Care Research and Evaluation funding opportunity | Turas | Learn](https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/73843)

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