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# NHS Shetland Remote and Rural Fellowship

January 2024

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The view towards Bressay from a GP's room at Lerwick Health Centre  
(this was taken in winter, it is lovely and calm in summer!)

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## Introduction

Shetland is an archipelago situated around 100 miles north of the Scottish mainland. Bergen, in Norway, is nearer than Aberdeen, and a nordic influence can still be felt in the isles.

<http://www.shetland.org/about/location>

The islands have a population of around 23,000, mainly living on the largest island, known locally as “the Mainland”. Around 17,000 patients live on the Mainland, around half of them in Shetland’s only town, Lerwick. Lerwick has a remote district general hospital with a complement of physicians, surgeons and anaesthetists, and is a training hospital for GPSTs and Core medical /surgical trainees. There are two psychiatrists in Lerwick, based near the hospital at Lerwick Health Centre. The community psychiatrists provide general psychiatric services and services for dual diagnosis/substance misuse.

Several of our GPs have worked with Promote Shetland to develop short video clips detailing what it is like to live and work in Shetland and you access the clips here:

<http://www.shetland.org/60n/video/1>

<http://www.shetland.org/discover/live-here/health>

Shetland is a great place to live and work, with excellent social and leisure opportunities too. You would first and foremost be part of the GP community in Shetland. This is a great opportunity to develop a special interest in this fascinating and challenging remote and rural location. You will be have the opportunity if you wish to take part in work including:

- Training in anaesthetic skills/advanced life support (adult and paediatric)
- Assisting with specialist clinics via video link from Gilbert Bain Hospital to remote specialty consultants Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (e.g. neurology clinics)
- Out of Hours GP home visiting service
- Out of Hours weekend GP clinics
- Minor surgery
- Remote single handed practices

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## The Hospital

The Gilbert Bain Hospital has inpatient beds in medicine, surgery and rehabilitation, which are consultant-led. The 5-bed maternity unit is midwife led with Consultant support for obstetrics and neonatal care.

We have great links with our hospital colleagues too, and as a fellow here you may be able to make the most of those links with the Surgical, medical and anaesthetic colleagues

The choices are up to you.

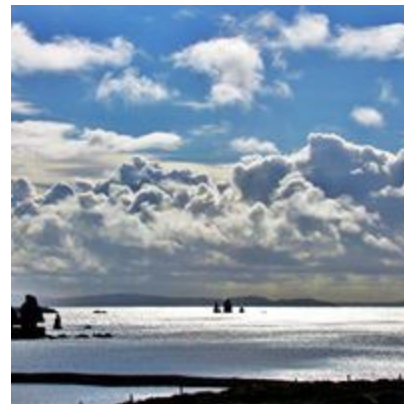
## The Health Centres

The Health Centres range from single handed surgeries on remote islands covering 650 patients (Unst), to a 8,600 patient town training practice with a mix of GPs, Advanced Nurse practitioners and up to 4 GP registrars (Lerwick). The other Health Centres lie somewhere in between in terms of size. We have a total of ten health centre buildings throughout Shetland, so there is plenty of variety and scope for you to develop your skills.

Photo of Scalloway



Photo of Hillswick



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## The Fellow's role

The fellow's role depends on the successful applicant's own CV and wishes. A quarter of the fellow's time will be spent at the fellow's base practice. Several Health Centres have expressed an interest in being the base practice, and we would encourage the prospective fellow to look into this before interview, but the choice of base practice is entirely down to the fellow – come and meet us and see what suits you best.

<http://www.shb.scot.nhs.uk/community/lerwickhc.asp>

<http://www.scallowayhealthcentre.co.uk>

The rest of the fellow's clinical time would be divided between any chosen GPwSI work and other primary care duties in other health centres, and would be negotiated by the fellow with primary care management.

We would love you to phone for a chat about what it's like to live and work in Shetland, and what a great opportunity this post gives.

## Contacts

Ms Lisa Watt, Primary Care Manger for Shetland ([lisa.watt@nhs.scot](mailto:lisa.watt@nhs.scot))

Dr Chloe Evans, Cluster Quality Lead and Scalloway GP ([chloe.evans@nhs.scot](mailto:chloe.evans@nhs.scot))

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## Notes from a Shetland GP Fellow

I had been on holiday to visit a friend in Shetland a year before applying to do the rural fellowship scheme. I enjoyed my brief visit – exploring the beautiful, wildlife-rich coastlines and learning about the islands' intriguing history and culture. I had heard positive reports from other people who had worked in medical jobs in Shetland. So after applying for the fellowship scheme, I decided to take up a post there.

Out of three 'base practice' options in Shetland the year I applied, I chose to work in Lerwick Health Centre. It is the sole practice in the most populated area of Shetland, so it is a fairly busy place, but the team are very friendly and supportive. The practice employs Advanced Nurse Practitioners who deal with the majority of acute 'on the day' problems. This frees up GPs to focus on managing patients with chronic and complex problems, whilst providing supervision to the nursing team. I have found it really interesting to see how this innovative model of primary care provision works in practice.

Being a rural fellow in Shetland has provided me with lots of great opportunities. I have had the chance to develop skills in minor surgery by helping out with a weekly outpatient list at the Gilbert Bain hospital. I have contributed to the out of hours visiting GP rota, increasing my experience in palliative care. Over the coming months, I am looking forward to spending a few weeks working at two of the smaller, more remote Shetland practices – in Hillswick and Unst, and getting a taste of single-handed general practice.

I would highly recommend applying to work in Shetland as part of the rural fellowship scheme. I have found the medical community, and indeed the wider community here, very welcoming. Doing the fellowship here is also a great way to broaden your experience and learn new skills, as you can essentially create your own job for the year e.g. by taking up opportunities to work in different parts of the islands or pursue special interest areas at the local hospital.

### A registrar's view

The article below was written by Lerwick's previous final year GPST in 2016, and gives some insight into practice in Shetland. She was part of NESs Remote and Rural Track training program, which gives registrars the opportunity (via an extra 6-12 months in General Practice compared to other training programs) to gain experience in a varied primary care environment, e.g. GPwSI work and remote island GP work, somewhat akin to the fellow's possible role, in fact.

<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/general-practice-gp/real-life-story-catherine-brown>