

## The challenges of recruiting health professionals to remote areas and the role a community can play in supporting recruitment.

### INTRODUCTION

In 2009 NHS Orkney was unable to recruit to healthcare posts on 8 of its 10 outer islands.

Part of the solution was to involve communities in the recruitment process. Significant service redesign was undertaken, with wide public consultation.

### AIM

To explore the values held by an island community about recruitment and their ability to play an active role.

### BACKGROUND

The capacity of communities to understand health care workforce challenges and service reforms are key components to identifying and implementing successful solutions (Albert and Passmore 2008).

Health Service Organisations and communities need to work together to overcome the complexities of recruiting and retaining health care staff in rural and remote areas (Becker 2013); and transformational change (Strasser et al 2018)

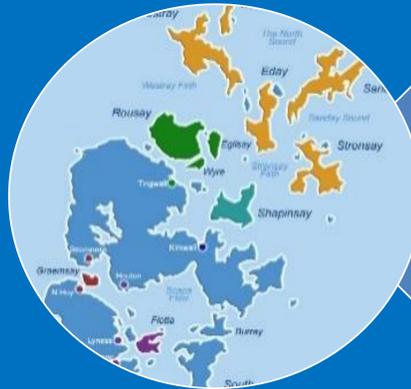
Successful public participation fosters trust; and produces noticeable benefits for organisations and citizens (Albert and Passmore 2008)

### CHALLENGES

- Danger of excessive community consultation
- Lack of trust in consultation processes
- Marketing of recruitment information and gaining interest in rural and remote health care vacancies
- Addressing the professional and personal needs of candidates
- Differences in perceived health delivery needs of community

“ It’s about giving something not taking away from a community-that’s the challenge” (Westray Islander)

### METHODS



12 Westray Islanders responsible toward 3 rounds of recruitment over 8 years, were interviewed to ascertain views about their role in recruitment and retention of health staff

### FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES

“Its not about them and us. There is freedom at local level- we have the autonomy to handle our own affairs. We feel part of the whole health experience” (Westray Community Council)



In 2010 the *Isles Network of Care* (INOC) was established to help address issues of recruitment . The communities were involved in the recruitment campaign and islanders engaged in recruitment activities such as promotional materials for application packs, hosting candidates on their islands; offering information on tourism, island services, the island economy and history. Community Councils and Development Trusts promote the islands as part of their recruitment responsibilities



All GPs and Nurse Practitioner positions within the Orkney Isles Network of Care have been fully recruited since 2015. Islanders demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of recruitment and retention. There is a clear collective commitment to working with the Primary Care Team to support recruitment and retention activities.



Community members recognise the importance of ensuring candidates and their families feel welcome and supported by the community. They highlight both positives and drawbacks of island life to potential candidates. They have an understanding of the challenges in finding the right calibre of staff and ensuring they are supported in maintaining and improving their skills.