Ar faidhle/Our ref: A3178179

30 May 2012

Dear [Name],

Equal Opportunities Committee Inquiry – Gypsy/Traveller and care

Thank you for your letter of 22 May about the Equal Opportunities Committee inquiry into the care of Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge that the Committee took oral evidence from the Gypsy / Traveller community and others as part of your inquiry on 15 May. Following receipt of this evidence you undertook to write to the Scottish Government about hand-held medical records (HHR).

The Committee are aware that the Scottish Government funded the National Resource Centre for Ethnic Minority Health (NRCEMH) to work with the Gypsy/Traveller community to develop hand-held patient records of personal health. This was part of a broader programme of work with Health Boards to ensure accessible information and services. The work of NRCEMH was transferred to the Equality Team at NHS Health Scotland and I note that you have concerns around the accountability for distribution and awareness-raising since the transfer of responsibility. I address your specific concerns below.

How handheld records were rolled out, including which geographical areas were targeted

A copy of the Patient Record of Personal Health was distributed to each Health Board in October 2005 for further distribution to appropriate health professions. Chief Executives were requested to ensure that arrangements were put in place to ensure the Patient Record of Personal Health was deployed effectively.

What follow up was done

In March 2006 a further letter was sent to the Practice Manager of every GP practice, to encourage them to circulate amongst colleagues and to request further copies where appropriate. This led to approx 1060 copies being requested, with the largest requests coming from Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Lothian.
A Gypsy Traveller Health Steering Group, which was chaired by a member of the Gypsy/Traveller community, agreed that a series of events would be hosted throughout Scotland to raise awareness of Gypsy/Traveller issues and roll out the hand-held record.

In February and March 2006 2 pilot sessions were held in Fort William and Edinburgh respectively. Sixteen subsequent sessions were held during May, June and July 2007.

What stocks of handheld records remain available / unused
NHS Health Scotland currently has 1290 copies of the HHR in stock.

Who currently is responsible for producing, distributing and raising awareness of the records
NHS Health Scotland has the lead role for co-ordinating and supporting work across NHSScotland on equality and health including work on gypsy/traveller health and has responsibility for distributing copies of the HHR on request. The HHR was promoted in partnership with the Keep Well programme at their national event in 2010. NHS Health Scotland delivered a Gypsy / Traveller health awareness raising session to NHS Dumfries and Galloway in September 2010. It is the responsibility of individual Health Boards to raise awareness of the record with their local communities and health services.

What monitoring there is of implementation, take-up and user experience
A brief evaluation of uptake of the HHR was conducted in 2009 for internal use in NHS Health Scotland as part of a broader piece of work to scope what work was underway targeting Gypsy / Traveller communities. A questionnaire was circulated in October 2009 to everyone who had requested copies of the HRR to monitor how they had been used. Unfortunately, out of 170 HRR copies issued only 9 were returned completed.

I hope this is helpful and I would also like to assure you that we place great importance on the need to ensure that the NHSScotland provides services which are accessible, appropriate and responsive for all the communities we serve.

Best wishes

Michael Matheson MSP