Scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2012-13 and Spending Review 2011

Alliance Boots

Overview

In the draft budget/Strategic Spending Review (SSR), the Scottish Government states that:

“... there will require to be an ongoing focus on delivering efficiency savings and increasing productivity building on past success.”

This recognition of the challenges facing NHS Scotland is welcome. The highly-trained, experienced and long-established profession of pharmacy, with its conveniently located network of community pharmacies can play a key role in increasing NHS Scotland’s efficiency.

The Scottish Government also says it will:

“... invest in evidence-based care and treatment which improves the quality of healthcare services, and increases the value and sustainability of our healthcare system in Scotland”.

This submission offers examples and evidence of where pharmacies in Scotland are doing exactly that; delivering more services to more people while reducing the burden on NHS Scotland.

It will also suggest how greater use of community pharmacies, including Boots, can help NHS Scotland deliver top class services while increasing its sustainability for the future.

“Alliance Boots in Scotland believes that this stated aim is both desirable and achievable. But we would urge the Scottish Government to recognise the significant part that pharmacy, and a network like Boots, can play in helping to make Scotland a genuine world leader in healthcare.

About Alliance Boots

At Alliance Boots, our mission is to be the world’s best pharmacy-led health and beauty group. The group’s businesses in Scotland include the Boots UK pharmacy chain, Boots Opticians and Alliance Healthcare (Distribution) Ltd, our full-line pharmaceutical wholesale division. They employ 6,500 people in over 280 retail and pharmacy stores across Scotland.
Boots UK is the largest pharmacy provider in Scotland, and dispenses over a quarter of all Scotland’s prescriptions.

Community healthcare is at the heart of our business, and our mission is to develop innovative healthcare products and services to help people manage their own health.

Our pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and healthcare assistants are available to provide customers with advice and support for:

- Long-term conditions, including support for medicines taking such as monitored dosage systems
- Self-care and the treatment of minor ailments, including making the best use of non-prescription medicines, vitamins and supplements
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including services to help with quitting smoking, managing weight and sexual health
- General health matters, available in store and through our online services such as BootsWebMD

Preventative spending

We agree with the Scottish Government’s view that increasing preventative spending is the best way to deal with some of the major demographic pressures facing NHS Scotland.

We believe that Boots pharmacies are well placed to continue to contribute to the health of our communities. They are frequently the first point of contact for members of the public who have a health-related issue and who are seeking professional advice.

The current Public Health Service (PHS) run through community pharmacies in Scotland as part of the pharmacy contract is held up as an exemplar in the other home countries of the UK – a true Scottish success story.

An excellent example of this is smoking cessation, which became part of PHS during 2008. ISD figures show that in 2007, there were 44,000 quit attempts. By 2010, thanks to the contribution of pharmacies, this had risen to 80,000 attempts, a rise of over 80% in three years.

By the end of 2010, community pharmacies had become the main provider of smoking cessation services, delivering 63% of all quit attempts (compared with only 17% in England). This does not include people’s own, self-funded attempts made using OTC smoking cessation products, the majority of which are purchased through pharmacies.

---

By intervening earlier in specific areas, for example medicines management, sexual health and addiction services, community pharmacies are augmenting and improving the services delivered to patients, and reducing the burden on NHS Scotland.

Health Checks

“Building on the success of the Keep Well programme of health checks, we will extend a programme of inequalities-targeted, high risk primary prevention to all NHS Boards’ activities from 2012-13. Evidence tells us that this is an effective and efficient approach to delaying the onset of cardiovascular disease and to tackling excess premature mortality within deprived communities. In addition, we will continue the roll out of Life Begins health checks.”

Health checks such as Life Begins and Keep Well are examples of the kind of positive interventions that Boots would like to see more of.

We would urge the Scottish Government and the Health and Sport Committee to consider which aspects of these programmes could be effectively delivered by community pharmacies such as Boots. Our stores have long opening hours and convenient locations. We could help NHS Scotland deliver more checks to a greater number of people, therefore increasing their effectiveness.

Preventative spending – early years intervention

Mothers-to-be and mums with young children are among the most frequent and loyal customers of Boots and other community pharmacies. They value the advice and support they receive from our highly trained staff, available to them without charge in our pharmacies.

Our pharmacies are situated in the communities where they live, work, shop and travel and many are open long hours and at weekends. Boots also has a large customer base of teenage girls. They predominantly visit our stores for beauty products, but they can be receptive to health messages, including those on sexual health, while in a pharmacy environment.

We believe that the Scottish Government should work closely with pharmacies to ensure that healthcare messages and information about the availability of early years services are delivered to the right audiences. The Scottish Government should:

- Use Boots’ expertise in social marketing to get across key messages to expectant and new mothers around the health benefits of folic acid, breast feeding and a generally healthy lifestyle, including stopping smoking
- Use the footfall of larger Boots stores to deliver health awareness messages to young people in an accessible way
Preventative spending – care of older people and those with long term or terminal conditions

The Scottish Government states that it will:

“... work in partnership to establish the most effective, person-centred, safe and sustainable treatment and care for people when they are sick with long term conditions or at the end of their lives to ensure that they are able to live in their homes, or in the community, as long as possible and appropriate ...”

Pharmacies such as Boots are a trusted and accessible part of most local communities, and are well placed to deliver services to elderly people or people with a long-term condition allowing them to remain in their homes and communities.

Rarely is patient convenience taken into account when clinical pathways and services are being designed. But the more services are delivered within the local community at patients’ convenience, the easier it will be to keep people independent, living in their own homes and communities for longer. Therefore, if keeping patients in their homes for longer is the aim, the accessibility and sustainability of the services that they need must be taken into account.

Working in partnership with community pharmacies such as Boots has the potential to help deliver this accessibility and convenience for NHS Scotland.

For example, community pharmacies could be delivering a comprehensive range of pharmaceutical care services that focus on improving outcomes for patients with long term conditions. This would include being able to adjust medication as appropriate and provide services that support patients to understand, remember and be able to take their medicines – thereby supporting their continued independence.

Efficiencies and reallocation

The Scottish Government’s stated aim is to:

“... provide a strengthened focus on supporting NHS Boards to increase efficiency and productivity through our NHS Efficiency and Productivity Framework, and we will prioritise approaches which increase the quality of our healthcare services by implementing evidence-based approaches which simultaneously increase the efficiency and effectiveness of healthcare services.”

We believe that the Scottish Government should reinforce the success already being achieved through the Public Health Service of the pharmacy contract by increasing the range of services provided through it.
In addition, awareness of the services offered through pharmacies is nowhere near what it could be. We urge both the Committee and the Scottish Government to extend its desire for greater partnership working to include social and health marketing.

Large pharmacy chains such as Boots have significant expertise in this area, and we believe that expertise could be better used by NHS Scotland to draw attention to the services, to increase take-up and so increase the health benefits.

The pharmacy sector is also contributing to the efficiency drive in a more direct way. Despite a 4% increase in the 80 million prescriptions being dispensed ever year, funding is not rising at anything like the same level.

**Prescription costs and eHealth**

e-Health is an area in which Alliance Boots are already engaged, and which we feel can deliver real benefits to patients, and also deliver real efficiencies for NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government.

We would be happy to work with the Scottish Government to maximise efficiency of their services, and to share services where possible.

Alliance Boots
18 October 2011