To: Health and Sports Committee

Re: Draft Budgets

We welcome the opportunity to comment on future budget spends and would ask for consideration of the following points which cover several Ministerial Departments.

In view of the 70% increase in malignant melanoma over the past decade and the increasing numbers of persons with skin cancers of other types, the cost to the NHS of treating these cancers is enormous and growing. The cause of 80% + of skin cancers is over exposure to ultra violet radiation - sunshine, particularly at an early age.

Deaths from melanoma, rob the country of tax payers as the majority of deaths are before retirement age. Melanoma is the most common cancer in the 15 to 34 age range. Prevention is easy – prevent sun burn. Treatment is cheap and simple if diagnosis is made early.

All new nurseries and schools should have planned shade provision.

Parenthood classes should include the need for prams to have sunshades as an essential. The need to keep babies in the shade over the danger times/months should be taught and sunburn considered as neglect.

Nurseries and schools should have a rigorous, imposed sun awareness policy. Summer uniform and sportswear should take this need into account. PTAs and individual parents should be encouraged to ensure that children are equipped with sun protection for outdoor activities. Routine use of sun protection over lunch breaks will encourage the habit to protect children throughout the summer holidays.

Sports centres and clubs should ensure that they have appropriate sunburn prevention policies for those using outdoor facilities including spectators – it need not be the provision of shade as this would be expensive for the club, but notices reminding spectators of the need for protection and perhaps sachets of sun cream available for purchase.
Sporting and outdoor events requiring funding or licences should demonstrate shade provision for spectators and a sun protection policy for participants.

Police, traffic wardens and other outdoor staff should have appropriate uniform to provide sun protection for the individual and to demonstrate to the public the need for protection – a highly visible public health improvement campaign in action. This could be very easily and cheaply provided without much expense.

The Olympic and Commonwealth Games will provide an ideal opportunity to educate the public about sun awareness with little extra cost. It could be a theme for the games, it may also encourage visitors!

Self management for those who have been diagnosed with the disease or who have a family history of melanoma would benefit from the teaching and pack available from MASScot – as the result of a grant from the Scottish Government via LTCAS. This will save NHS staff time and encourage patients and their relatives to learn about prevention and early diagnosis of secondary disease.

Public education from April to September via posters in all NHS premises, GP surgeries and retail pharmacies to teach people how to protect themselves, the need for prevention and to report skin changes to a doctor sooner rather than later will save lives. Pharmacists might be involved as the first line of enquiry but both they and GPs will need extra training in dermatology to determine what needs to be referred and what can be treated with OTC or prescribable preparations.

We hope you will consider the above in future plans.

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Chair
MASScot.