January 2017

Dear Neil

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE IMPROVING GENERAL PRACTICE (GP) SUSTAINABILITY, CLUSTER ADVISORY AND PREMISES SHORT LIFE WORKING GROUPS

With an increasing awareness of the challenges facing general practice across Scotland, I announced in March 2016, the establishment of three SLWGs that operated alongside already established work streams for workforce planning/recruitment and retention, GP IT and Primary Care Transformation (PCT). No SLWG operated in isolation but instead each maintained close links with the others, as well as the established work streams.

Sustainability - This national collaborative approach to working together to best support practices in difficulty provided the opportunity to share information on sustainability challenges in Scotland towards developing a broader understanding of what can be done better to improve practice sustainability.

The recommendations from the Group that were accepted by me included:

- Enact a Sustainability Action Plan for managing General Practice workload that contains short, medium and longer term actions.
- Develop a Practice Sustainability Network that both shares and supports current and future learning on practice sustainability across Scotland.
- Promote the use of, and share the learning from, a Practice Sustainability Assessment Tool.

In order to progress the recommendations Scottish Government officials are now focusing attention on establishing a longer term Practice Sustainability Group that first met on 17 January 2017, to provide oversight and advice on the progression of the recommendations. Copy of the report is attached.
Premises - NHS Board funded costs associated with GP premises are increasing at a level which is difficult to sustain. To achieve the Scottish Government’s intention to shift care out of hospitals and into local communities, there is a need to support and build the infrastructure required to enable general practice to provide this care and there is common interest in resolving GP premises issues and securing sustainable infrastructure which is fit for purpose.

In due course I will write to the Health and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament with an update on the work of the Premises Short-Life Working Group which is working to understand the GP Premises estate, and to develop short term options and a medium/long term strategy for GP Premises.

Clusters – The healthcare system is changing in response to the demands placed upon it. The National Clinical Strategy for Scotland signals the transformation required in Primary Care so that it may fulfil its potential at the heart of this system. Improving Together will complement the development of the Scottish national GP contract that sets out the role of GPs and their important contribution as clinical leaders and expert medical generalists working in a community setting. The framework will be reviewed by the Scottish Government and the Scottish General Practitioners Committee of the BMA on a periodic basis, agreed by both parties, and any documents referred to will be updated at this time. Copy of the report is attached.

I welcome the Committee’s work and continued interest and I am confident that we can work together and ensure we are moving in the right direction to ensure that our health and care services are fit for the future.

SHONA ROBISON