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Justice Committee

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Health and Sport Committee

James Dornan MSP
Convenor
Education and Skills Committee

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Dear Convenors,

On behalf of my Ministerial colleagues, following my letter of 6 October 2017, I am writing to further update the Committee on progress regarding forensic medical examinations in Scotland. Today, I am pleased to enclose a copy of the first ever published HealthCare Improvement Scotland standards which will provide Health Boards with clarity on best practice so that anyone who has experienced rape, sexual assault or child sexual abuse, can receive the same high level of person centred care.

Progressing this work is a key priority for the Scottish Government. We are listening to people with lived experience and know that the immediate and long term physical and psychological consequences of sexual violence can be devastating. Anyone who has experienced this trauma can be reassured that the Scottish Government are putting in place measures that will help to make a difference.

Ensuring a consistency in approach to the quality of forensic medical and healthcare services, will also help to improve the individual's well-being, reduce the likelihood of further trauma for victims as well as ensuring the timely collection of evidence to support any criminal justice proceedings. You may also wish to know that a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between Rape Crisis Scotland and the Crown Office, further enabling victims to share their experience of the criminal justice system and to inform necessary improvements.


The new HIS standards are backed by £0.25m of Government funding in the current financial year and in 2018/19 additional capital funding of £2.0m will be provided to improve facilities for the victims of rape and sexual assault, including improving the provision of forensic medical examinations. This demonstrates the Scottish Government's commitment to supporting Health Boards to make immediate improvements in the provision of trauma informed health care which they will be expected to deliver under the new standards.



As set out in the Taskforce's five year work plan¹, a key priority is to support Health Boards to deliver services in person centred surroundings, including over time moving any forensic medical examination facilities from police settings to health and social care settings.

The CMO's Taskforce will also be working with the Expert Group for Preventing Sexual Offending involving Children and Young People. Chaired by Catherine Dyer, the Expert Group has been asked to identify actions to better prevent sexual crime involving children and young people and mitigate the harm it causes. As a member of the First Ministers' new Advisory Council on Women and Girls, the CMO will also advocate for changes that can be made across society to deliver equality, including initiatives that prevent violence against women and girls.

I am sure you will agree that these are all important steps towards improving outcomes for people who have experienced rape and sexual assault.

Best wishes


MICHAEL MATHESON MSP

¹ <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-victims-taskforce-high-level-work-plan/High%20Level%20Work%20Plan.pdf?inline=true>