



Royal College of
General Practitioners

BETTER HEALTH, BETTER CARE: A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT – CONSULTATION

RCGP SCOTLAND COMMENTS - 12/11/07

Thank you for inviting our views on the Better Health, Better Care: A Discussion Document consultation exercise.

The overall opinion is generally favourable and, speaking broadly, the main aspects of the document are welcomed. Early intervention to give children the best possible start, local delivery of care, increased focus on anticipatory care including the HPV vaccination, fast track to diagnostics and treatment services, pre-admittance screening for MRSA and greater access to GP and hospital services are all considered to be very sensible and worthy goals.

While it is difficult to disagree with the issues as set out in the document, (as well as the questions posed and the views sought), it is RCGP Scotland's view that the report lacked some necessary detail and specificity. Furthermore, it is extremely important to keep the overarching "big public health picture" in mind throughout. Indeed, the major public health issues of, inter alia, elderly care, obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse are of fundamental importance due to the huge knock-on effect on resources, and these issues are not addressed in any significant way.

We firmly believe that Primary Care/General Practice is paramount to the effective delivery of the aims set out by Better Health, Better Care and that this role should receive greater acknowledgement. A further specific point in reference to Primary Care can be found on p18 of the discussion document which promotes "continuous quality improvement". The primary care Quality Practice Award (QPA) is here in Scotland already as a challenge to practices to demonstrate to themselves, their colleagues, and their patients that they are providing the gold standard of primary care. Therefore we hold the doctrine that the QPA system already provides the means of supplying "continuous quality improvement" in the primary care sector and we would look for support from the Scottish Government in the promotion of QPA to practices.

Some general points:

- We believe that the overall success of the initiative will be greatly aided by vigorous action on many levels. The fundamentals of Better Health, Better Care should be maintained and increased by encouraging and enticing involvement of partners in the work place, big business, the education sector, the entertainment industry, sport and the leisure industry and so on.

- Concerns exist with the policy on free prescriptions, specifically the potential for an increase in workload if, for example, patients begin seeking free prescriptions for paracetamol and other medicines that are currently available over the counter.
- Also, we feel that an attempt to change culture is required, possibly backed by popular role models, to encourage young people that it is “cool” to be healthy and at the same time to enjoy life and its social pleasures.

A final point that we would like to highlight is the considerable work that has already been undertaken in addressing the "Delivering for Health" initiatives. We hope that the progress made by the previous administration is not overlooked, as much of what Better Health, Better Care is striving for has begun under the remit of the various groups emerging from the Delivering for Health program.

We hope that you find these comments useful and look forward to seeing the next stage as this document evolves.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Lawton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Dr Kenneth Lawton
Chair