



British Association of Art Therapists  
 British Association and College of Occupational  
 Therapists  
 The British Dietetic Association  
 British Association of Prosthetists and  
 Orthotists  
 British and Irish Orthoptic Society  
 Chartered Society of Physiotherapy  
 Royal College of Speech and Language  
 Therapists  
 Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists  
 Society and College of Radiographers

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## AHP Forum Scotland Submission to the Scottish Government Local Healthcare Bill Consultation

### **The Allied Health Professions Forum Scotland**

The Allied Health Professions Forum Scotland (AHPFS) is a strategic alliance of AHP professional bodies representing the collective voice of the 13,000 AHPs in Scotland working to promote and optimise AHPs' essential contribution to improved patient care in Scotland.

AHP Forum Scotland aspires to achieve a circumstance where Scotland's people can optimally benefit from the skills, knowledge and experience available to them from the AHP workforce.

### **Forum Members**

The following bodies are members of the Allied Health Professions Forum Scotland:

*Art Therapies Advisory Group*  
*British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists*  
*British Dietetic Association*  
*British and Irish Orthoptic Society*  
*British Association/College of Occupational Therapists*  
*Chartered Society of Physiotherapy*  
*Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists*  
*Society and College of Radiographers*  
*The Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists*

### **Local Healthcare Bill**

AHP Forum Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit views on the Local Healthcare Bill Consultation. The make up and function of the geographic health boards of NHS Scotland are of primary concern to the allied health professions.

AHP Forum Scotland strongly support the aims of the Healthcare Bill to focus health boards on better engagement with local communities, more patient involvement and better decision making at a strategic level in the design and delivery of future services.

In supporting the aims of better accountability and better decision making, AHP Forum Scotland do not wish to speak on behalf of the local communities, patient groups and service users that the Bill seeks to include. Indeed it is of crucial importance that a voice is given to these stakeholders and that greater consideration of their views is sought.

However, the role of the AHPs is both complex and diverse and not always fully recognised throughout the NHS. AHP Forum Scotland seeks future legislation to intervene to ensure better decision-making and accountability for the service users of the allied health professions by providing AHP Directors on every health board.

The Allied Health Professions are crucial at every stage and every level in the planning and delivery of improved services and their inclusion in the decision making process is vital. The place of AHPs in the chain of services and the role of AHP staff in reducing waiting times and improving services cannot be under stated. Whether with reference to the role of radiography and waiting times in cancer care and acute services, or physiotherapy and rehabilitation in the community, the AHPs must be included in service redesign. Patient care can be severely adversely affected in circumstances where allied health professionals are not consulted, and this is increasingly recognised across the NHS in Scotland.

The inclusion of allied health professions in planning and decision-making is not straightforward. As can be appreciated from the scope and diversity of the professional bodies, the allied health professions are organised in smaller units and often do not have the 'critical mass' to organise themselves collectively to have a strong voice within health boards. Historically, the professional and staff input to the NHS has had a tendency to be dominated by the medical and nursing contribution. The much smaller number and stratified nature of allied health professions has meant that their influence and ability to contribute to the planning and decision making process has been more limited.

AHP Forum Scotland has been established to ensure a stronger national voice for the AHPs in Scotland, but this level of organisation cannot be beneficial to patient care unless it is reflected by an improved input for AHPs at local Health Board and strategic levels in the NHS structures.

Indeed while the AHP professional bodies and the Scottish Government have responded to challenges over the years, the broad structure of Health Boards has not altered accordingly. The creation of a Chief Health Professions Officer in Government, amended draft legislation to include AHPs on Community Health Partnerships committees, discrete AHP units and staff within the new Special Health Boards all demonstrate the move to a more inclusive NHS in Scotland. It is now time that Health Boards reflected such changes with the inclusion of AHPs at Board level and at the relevant strategic levels in NHS Scotland.

Crucial to the future government agenda, as set out in Better Health Better Care, is the continued development of team working among all the staff and stakeholders in the NHS. The role of the allied health professionals must be seen in equal partnership if genuine progress is to be realised.

The establishment of a statutory requirement for the inclusion of an AHP Director on all NHS Boards would provide an equal strategic influence and enable the allied health professions to fulfil their leadership roles. Equitable and properly supported AHP representation on Health Boards would:

- Ensure AHP potential to improve Scotland's health was effectively utilised to the optimum benefit of patients.
- Challenge and refresh the traditional models that have historically shaped, driven and produced Scotland's health profile and improvement agenda to date.
- Represent a concrete example of the aim of delivering a 'health service of all the talents'

- Support the mapping of AHP integration in service delivery in order to identify sources of lost opportunity and maximise public investment by working smarter
- Ensure integration of AHP (evidence based) added value in assessment of variation in practice across Scotland.

**Conclusion**

Since Devolution the Scottish health system has changed dramatically. The emergence of the AHPs as a distinct group within the NHS has found expression at every level of the NHS, from Community Partnerships to Special Health Boards. Only the geographic Health Boards have remained unchanged. The multidisciplinary team working and networking of the AHPs to cross considerable stratification in professional terms is a testament to the commitment of the allied health professionals to collaboration and modernisation in the NHS.

In order to deliver improved patient services the role of the modern AHPs is crucial to better, faster closer and safer health care.

**AHP Forum Scotland  
March 2008**

## **Allied Health Professions**

### **Art Therapists**

Help patients to understand their problems and come up with solutions through the use of arts such as painting, drawing and sculpture.

### **Chiropodists/ Podiatrists**

Diagnose and treat foot problems, carry out nail surgery and give advice on proper care of the foot especially for those with conditions such as diabetes.

### **Dieticians**

Work with people to promote wellbeing, prevent food-related problems and treat ill health through diet.

### **Occupational Therapists**

Use a variety of activities, and/or equipment and adaptations, to enable recovery after illness or injury and to support independent living and health.

### **Orthoptists**

Diagnose and treat a range of eye disorders and defects of vision.

### **Orthotists**

Design and fit pieces of equipment known as *orthoses* to patients who need support for a weak arm, leg or spine.

### **Prosthetists**

Provide care and advice for patients who have lost or were born without a limb, fitting the best possible artificial replacement.

### **Physiotherapists**

Assess and treat people with physical problems caused by injury, ageing, disease or disability promoting recovery and relief from pain.

### **Radiographers**

Diagnostic radiographers produce high quality images using all kinds of radiation, such as X-rays, and other tests to diagnose illness. Therapeutic Radiographers treat mainly cancer patients using radiation therapy, and occasionally drugs, and support their care through all phases of the illness.

### **Speech and Language Therapists**

Assess, diagnose and treat people who have communication and/or swallowing difficulties.