

BUILDING A MORE SUSTAINABLE NHS IN SCOTLAND: HEALTH PROFESSIONS LEAD THE CALL FOR ACTION

On 23 February 2015 health professionals, representing nurses, doctors, the allied health professions and pharmacists, joined together in Edinburgh to discuss the future sustainability of the health service in Scotland. The conference was jointly hosted by the British Medical Association Scotland, the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland and the Royal College of Nursing Scotland.

THE OVERWHELMING CONSENSUS OF OUR EVENT WAS THE NEED FOR CHANGE

Scotland has a growing population of older people successfully living longer, but often doing so with a range of complex and multiple physical and mental health care needs. When this is combined with Scotland's persistent health inequalities, the recognition of the need to invest more in early years, inflationary pressures from expensive new drugs and technologies, ongoing budget constraints and rising public expectations, we know we simply cannot deliver services the way we have done up until now. Marginal change and improvement will not be enough to create a more sustainable health service.

To bring about genuine and substantial change, we need to be bold and visionary. We need to work together across the health professions, with the public, the Scottish Government, NHS Boards and Integration Authorities to agree how to secure better sustainability in the health service for our own families, as well as for future generations.

SETTING THE SCENE

In February, our organisations, which represent doctors and nurses across Scotland, came together with other health professionals in the belief that those who work in our health service – with a 'lived' experience of it – have a crucial contribution to make to the future sustainability of the NHS and a key role to play in leading debate on the issues.

This is the first time that the health professions have spoken with a single voice, emphasising the importance of joined up action and the serious and urgent nature of the choices we face on the future of the NHS.

ACTIONS AND COMMITMENTS

We care passionately about the health service. Our members are committed health professionals who deliver care across the country every day of the week, every week of the year. They are also members of the public who rely on the NHS for themselves and their families. **As professional leaders, we share a collective aim to see our health service put on a more sustainable footing in the future through tangible actions, taken now.** We are committed to playing our part in leading the professions in designing and delivering the changes that are required to achieve this aim.

Based entirely on what was discussed and highlighted

by all the health professionals at the event on 23 February, we have set out four key areas of activity which we believe, if pursued effectively and collectively, will have the greatest impact on the future sustainability of the health service. Some of these are for us to deliver as professional leaders; some of these are for others. However, none of this will work unless we all – professions, organisations, politicians, the media and the public – work together in pursuit of a more sustainable health service.

ACTION 1: A GENUINE PUBLIC DEBATE ON CHANGE

Change is desperately needed, but can only be successful if everyone affected is involved. Starting right now the public, politicians and staff must be brought into a frank debate about the current pressures on the health service and the options available to put the NHS on a more sustainable footing.

OUR COMMITMENT:

- We commit our organisations to begin an open debate with the public, with staff and with politicians, starting in the summer of 2015. We will share our experiences as health professionals and our understanding of the need for change.
- Starting with this document, we will set out those areas we believe require urgent action to make a real difference and engage in discussion on these to shape our thinking. We will listen to ideas from the public, politicians and staff on the future sustainability of the health service. We will engage using all available tools to kick-start this much-needed debate.

ACTION 2: A NEW APPROACH TO TARGETS

The current approach to setting and reporting on national targets and measures, while having initially delivered some real improvements, is now creating an unsustainable culture that pervades the NHS. It is often skewing clinical priorities, wasting resources and focusing energy on too many of the wrong things. As a matter of urgency, there needs to be a more mature approach to how the NHS uses targets, standards and other performance measures to ensure better and sustainable outcomes across the health service.

OUR COMMITMENT:

- Over the course of 2015, we will develop an agreement across the professions on the principles which should underpin a new model for measuring success in our health service. This will be focused on better outcomes for patients and supporting sustainable service improvements.
- We will test out our thinking on this new model in our engagement with the public and with politicians.
- We commit to working inclusively and call on the Scottish Government, NHS Boards and Integration Authorities to engage with us and our members in this work.

ACTION 3: NEW WAYS OF DELIVERING CARE

The world is changing fast. The people who require care and treatment, and those delivering it, have different needs and expectations than they did just a generation ago, but how services are delivered and resourced has not kept pace.

The Scottish Government has set out its 2020 vision for healthcare services to support people to live at home or in a homely environment, wherever that is possible and appropriate. But there has not been enough progress made towards achieving this vision. Instead, the focus has remained firmly on the traditional model of hospitals as the mainstay of the health service. This needs to change.

New models for the delivery of care need to be developed that are fit for the future and will deliver the best care possible in an ever-more complex and ever-more demanding world. The focus must always be on delivering the best possible safe, effective and person-centred care, in the most sustainable way, for the people who need to use health services.

OUR COMMITMENT:

- We understand that the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport intends to produce a new national clinical strategy, which we expect to set out new models of care. As professional leaders we urge the Scottish Government to ensure this strategy is designed and developed with our full engagement and those of our professional colleagues. We commit to playing a key role, alongside NHS Boards, Integration Authorities and the Scottish Government, in building sustainable services through this process.
- We will engage with our own members, sharing the views of frontline staff to influence the development of these new models of care, recognising that our members will be the ones who will need to implement Scottish Government policies and make them work.
- We call on the Scottish Government to engage openly with the public in this process.

ACTION 4: IMPROVED INTER-PROFESSIONAL WORKING

Fragmented structures, overload and out-dated ways of working mean that the full potential of the most

valuable resource in our health service – the people who work in it – is often not achieved. We could work much more effectively if the barriers to collaborative team working were effectively challenged and professionals were trusted, equipped and enabled to work across the full range of their expertise

OUR COMMITMENT:

- We will develop, by early 2016, a consensus from the professions about the practical actions that could be taken, nationally and locally, to address some of the key barriers to working effectively across professions. We will share this with NHS Boards, Integration Authorities and the Scottish Government.
- We commit, collectively, to the principle that every health professional should be equipped, expected and enabled to work across the breadth of their expertise and to the top of their skill level as part of a multi-professional team. We will embed this principle in the activities of our individual organisations.
- We offer to work with the Scottish Government, NHS Boards and Integration Authorities to develop an approach to workforce planning that builds on this principle.

CONCLUSION

We believe that, right now, the NHS needs its health professionals to step forward to take a leading role in ensuring the quality and sustainability of services for current and future generations of people living in Scotland. We believe that we have a unique and vital role to play, and call on the public, the media, politicians, the Scottish Government and managers to work with us to secure the future of our most valuable national resource: our NHS.

The time for talking and political point scoring has passed. We need to take practical action, together, now.

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