



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Mr Colin Beattie MSP
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

18 November 2016

Dear Colin,

Further to our recent meeting in the Scottish Parliament I am writing with a response to your constituent [REDACTED] letter about the NHS in Lothian and Midlothian in particular.

My officials have made enquires with Midlothian Health & Social Care Partnership regarding the situation in Midlothian. I understand that the Partnership is planning primary care provision within Shawfair and agreeing options for future models of care with Midlothian Council and that there is also work ongoing to address current capacity issues in general practice including an agreement that NHS Lothian will provide initial funding to convert an existing facility in Newtongrange into a new practice which should be operational by Spring 2017.

I also understand that Dalkeith Medical Practice expects to recruit more GPs in the near future; successful recruitment will allow the practice to end restrictions on its patient list.

Practices are contracted by Health Boards to provide general medical services and the Scottish Government cannot intervene in how they choose to communicate with their patients. However I outlined plans this March to provide £2 million additional funding to improve or upgrade IT infrastructure in GP practices as part of a £20 million package for GPs to ease pressures on the workforce over the next year.

I hope this is helpful to you.

*Best wishes,
Shona*

SHONA ROBISON



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18 November 2016

Dear Colin,

Further to our recent meeting in the Scottish Parliament I am writing with a response to your constituents, [REDACTED] and their concerns about the Riverside Practice advising [REDACTED] to seek private ear syringing.

I understand that [REDACTED] wrote to the Practice Manager with a complaint and has received an apology from the practice. If [REDACTED] are not satisfied with this response then the next step in the NHS Complaints Procedure is to seek further independent consideration by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

The Patient Advice and Support Service has been set up to help patients and their families understand their rights and responsibilities when using health services. The service is being offered through local Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB). It is independent and provides free, confidential information, advice and support to people who wish to give feedback, make comments, raise concerns or make a complaint about treatment and care provided by the NHS in Scotland.

[REDACTED] may also wish to consider sharing his experience of the NHS via Patient Opinion. This is an independent website where patients, their carers or family members can tell other people about their experiences of the NHS. NHS Boards are alerted to stories posted about services in their area and are encouraged by the Scottish Government to respond. [REDACTED] can share his story online or by telephone [0800 122 3135].

I hope this is helpful to you.

*Best wishes,
Shona*

SHONA ROBISON

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport
Shona Robison MSP



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Mr Colin Beattie MSP
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18 November 2016

Dear Colin

Further to our recent meeting in the Scottish Parliament I am writing to provide you with an update on the possibility of NHS 24 triage in the Lothians and our recent agreement with the BMA. I will provide individual replies to your constituents' letters.

NHS 24 Triage

As part of the Scottish Government's proposals to test aspects of the recommendations in Lewis Ritchie's *Pulling Together* report, NHS 24 is testing a co-ordinated and scalable solution to supporting GP Triage during the in-hours period. The proposal is based on the successful evaluation of a small trial within NHS Forth Valley and extends the model to provide capacity on a routine basis to a group of practices. In addition, the test will also provide for planned requests to support 'Practices in Difficulty'. This will be developed in the context of any recommendations emerging from the work of Short Life Working Group on Improving Practice Sustainability. The pilot will also engage with key stakeholders (including the LCM) and measure its impact on the wider system.

NHS 24 has confirmed that they are in discussion with NHS Lothian as one of the pilot sites.

Joint Agreement

The joint Scottish Government/BMA communication, 3 November, issued to all GPs across Scotland is an important milestone that shows the real shared grounds for optimism due to our shared vision and agreed plan, backed up by significant investment. It sets out a shared vision for how primary care services can be improved, and the enhanced role GPs have to play, and will form the bedrock of our work towards a new GP contract. This publication can be found at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/11/7258>.

*Best wishes,
Shona*

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18 November 2016

Further to our recent meeting in the Scottish Parliament I am writing with a response to your constituent [REDACTED] concerns about her long wait for a gastroenterology appointment.

I am sorry to learn of [REDACTED] condition and her concerns about the time taken to be seen by a specialist. When a GP refers a patient for hospital care they should make clear details of the patient's condition and indicate whether the patient should be seen urgently or routinely. Clinicians will, as a general rule, see and treat patients based on the patient's clinical priority.

In Scotland NHS Boards have budgets to commission and also provide healthcare for their local populations. As patients generally prefer services to be as close to home as possible this is usually provided within the Board's practice boundary and GPs will work with what is available locally. However, if [REDACTED] is happy to be referred outwith the boundary of her board she can discuss that with her GP. Individual cases can be considered on their relative merits and, if there are sound reasons, her GP can make a referral to a neighbouring Board in Scotland.

[REDACTED] may also wish to consider sharing her experience of the NHS via Patient Opinion. This is an independent website where patients, their carers or family members can tell other people about their experiences of the NHS. NHS Boards are alerted to stories posted about services in their area and are encouraged by the Scottish Government to respond. [REDACTED] can share her story [online](#) or by telephone [0800 122 3135].

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