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Dr Alyson Reive and Dr Eileen Sanderson
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Dear Dr Reive & Dr Sanderson,

Thank you for your letter of 21 September regarding the situation of the Southside Surgery.

I am grateful for receiving an accurate account of the practice's circumstances. My understanding is that NHS Lothian is continuing to seek premises for your practice. The board is pursuing various avenues but commercial constraints prevent full disclosure of this work.

It is not the case that health boards cannot acquire premises; a Health Board has to explore all options within NHS Scotland's estate before buying or leasing properties and would have to appraise alternative options but it is not excluded from buying or leasing private property in the interests of its patients.

There is an increasing awareness of practices being 'in difficulty' (facing sustainability challenges) across Scotland and agreement between Scottish Government and boards that it may be better if boards do not tackle this issue in isolation but instead work together to share an understanding of the underlying causes.

The GP Premises Short Life Working Group met over the summer and is finalising its recommendations on the short, medium and long term options to deal with GP premises issues. There are links between this work and wider work on sustainability and transformation. The 'last person standing' scenario is a priority issue. The group is expected to issue its recommendations to me this autumn; and in due course I will write to the Health and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament with an update.

I hope this is helpful to you.

*Yours sincerely,
Shona Robison*

SHONA ROBISON