

Report of Secretary for Scotland to Guild Council Meeting 14/5/09

Group Meetings

I am not aware of any group meetings having taken place since my last report.

In the Press

26.03.09 - Money-back offers and cut-price deals on new drugs were yesterday given the go-ahead by the Scottish Government in efforts to improve access to treatments in Scotland. Nicola Sturgeon, the health secretary, confirmed drugs companies would be allowed to put forward these offers when making applications for their products to be used on the NHS. She also announced boards would be given new guidance to ensure that exceptional prescribing measures were equally applied across Scotland. New advice has also been issued to health boards that will, in some circumstances, let patients top-up with private treatment, without losing out on free NHS care. The new guidelines allow the controversial co-payments but Nicola Sturgeon said no-one would be allowed to pay the NHS to "top-up" their care.

1.04.09 - From today the cost of a single prescription item falls to £4. Cuts in prescription charges are having a "welcome impact", Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon said today as the latest price drop came into effect. As well as reducing the fees for single prescription items, the cost of prescription pre-payment certificates has also been brought down. Since the introduction of reduced charges in April last year, the number of people opting to use a prescription pre-payment certificate has increased by 110% to 343,100.

16.04.09 - Hospital budgets are being stretched by the cost of expensive medicines, Audit Scotland has warned in a report that the country's acute hospitals spent £222m on drugs for patients in 2007-08. This represented a 76% increase in the total bill of £126m five years earlier. Audit Scotland said its research found that an average of £70 was spent on providing drugs for each patient treated in hospital last year. Spending on medicines has increased more than overall hospital expenditure, which went up by 69% over the past five years, the report said. The report was published just days after Professor John Smyth, an Edinburgh University cancer specialist, said that tough choices may need to be made over which treatments should be paid for from limited public funds.

24.04.09 - Nicola Sturgeon has ordered an independent public inquiry into a fatal outbreak of *Clostridium difficile* at a Dunbartonshire hospital. A total of 55 people at the *Vale of Leven Hospital* were affected by the infection, and 18 patients died, between December 2007 and June 2008. The inquiry will be chaired by former High Court judge Lord Coulsfield and will get under way after investigations currently being carried out by police, the Health and Safety Executive and prosecutors have been completed.

21.04.09 - It was announced yesterday that a four-week exercise to prepare Scotland for a flu pandemic is to start next week. The Scottish Government will be running the emergency exercise, called *Cauld Crow*, involving health boards, the ambulance services and other organisations who will be key to managing a severe outbreak of flu.

07.05.09 - Scotland has appointed its own "flu tsar" to help deal with the threat of a pandemic, it emerged yesterday. Nicola Sturgeon said Kenneth Hogg had been appointed last week to oversee the handling of the current swine flu scare and any future outbreaks. He was previously deputy director of public health at the Scottish Government and will now be its flu director.

07.05.09 - The number of Scots suffering heart attacks has dropped by more than 1,500 in five years, figures revealed yesterday. In 2004, 8,894 people in Scotland were admitted to hospital as an emergency after a heart attack. Last year's figure was 7,326 – down almost 18 per cent. There were large falls in areas such as Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Lanarkshire and Tayside, but increases in Borders and Highland.

Scottish Regional Health Sector Committee 17.4.09

I was unable to attend this meeting as I was on annual leave.

Review of NHS Production in Scotland

A meeting of some members of the Project Board and the Chief Executive of NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde was held on 28th April to try to resolve matters with the final submission paper. I was accompanied by Regional Officer Michael Fuller and explanations were provided over the changes to the paper which had caused so much concern. The paper will now go to the NHS Scotland Chief Executives Group meeting on 20th May.

AfC

Annex R of the Agenda for Change terms and conditions has still not been implemented in Greater Glasgow & Clyde. Letters requesting the submission of evidence for reviews are expected to be issued at the end of May.

Staffside of the Greater Glasgow & Clyde PPSU Partnership Forum have also arranged a meeting on 20th May to discuss the process with members.

Other

I have dealt with a number of member queries following a trawl for addresses for the electronic newsletter and a few new membership applications.

Colin Rodden
11.5.09