

New website promotes evolving practice

A new interactive website has been launched to promote good examples of Patient Focus and Public Involvement from across Scotland.

The Scottish Health Council Evolving Practice website will enable healthcare professionals to share their experiences of how they have engaged with patients and the public to improve services.

Visitors to the site can search a database and find case studies outlining initiatives from around Scotland, and access a list of recommended websites supporting Patient Focus and Public Involvement activities.

Current case studies featured on the site include the introduction of feedback cards to enable people to comment on GP services in Dumfries and Galloway and a specialist service to give young people in Lothian advice about sexual health.

Evolving Practice will let users build up a portfolio of their own work and take part in a nationwide network of Patient Focus and Public Involvement.



Scottish Health Council Policy Officer Rebecca Willshee and Information Officer Richard McCrea peruse Evolving Practice

Registration is optional, but allows users to interact more with the site. The registration process is quick, simple and free. Once users have signed up they can submit examples of their own work, add comments and ratings to existing case studies, and contact other members who are involved in similar work.

Scottish Health Council Information Officer Richard McCrea, who manages the website, said: "My vision for the website is that it will facilitate and encourage

sharing and learning. Patient Focus and Public Involvement projects don't have to be complicated to be effective and I hope that users will be inspired to develop the ideas on the site and engage with patients and the public in their own communities."

The website can be viewed at www.evolvingpractice.org

Citizens Advice Bureau to provide complaints support

Health Minister Shona Robison attended the launch of a new partnership between NHS boards and the Citizens Advice Bureau service that will see local bureaux help people take forward any complaints they have about their healthcare.

The new initiative will see the Citizens Advice Bureau guide people through the NHS complaints process and help them engage with the system on level terms.

It follows the publication of a report, commissioned by the Scottish Health Council and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, which warns that many Scots still struggle to voice concerns or complaints about the NHS treatment they have received.

Scottish Health Council Director Richard Norris said: "In the past, making a complaint about NHS services could be a daunting process but the support being made available by the Citizens Advice Bureau is good news for patients, carers and the public.

"Complaints have an important role, not only giving people an opportunity to raise concerns, but also in helping NHS Boards to bring about improvements to services. The Scottish Health Council welcomes this new approach and will be monitoring it closely to ensure that it genuinely gives patients a real say in health services."



From left, Scottish Health Council Director Richard Norris, Health Minister Shona Robison and Scottish Health Council Chairman Brian Beacom

Professor Alice Brown, the Ombudsman, said: "The research has validated our sense that there are people who are unhappy with the health care they receive, but who nonetheless do not complain. The report identifies barriers to complaining often experienced by different members of the public. It also makes recommendations about how these barriers can be overcome. I believe that this initiative will provide skilled support for people who wish to make a complaint. As the office that represents the 'last resort' for complainants, I wholeheartedly welcome the launch of the service."

The report looked at the experiences of people who have complained about the NHS in Scotland since April 2005 and those who chose not to. While the vast majority of patients express high levels of satisfaction

with the service they receive, it says, "the level of formal complaints made is likely to be an underestimate of the true level of dissatisfaction".

Waiting times, delays, inconsistency in the medical staff seen, and staff behaviour are among the main causes of dissatisfaction.

Most people are unsure how to complain, the report concludes. "Evidence suggests that there is a need for a range of advice and support services to be made available to those who want to complain. For the more confident, good written information and advice is likely to be sufficient; for others the new service to be developed by CAB may be appropriate."

A full copy of the report can be viewed at www.scottishhealthcouncil.org

Patients urged to use real-life experiences to make real changes to health services

Leading health charities in Scotland are urging more members of the public to have their voice heard and to influence health services.

Delegates at the annual Hearty Voices Scotland conference, 'Patients as Drivers of Change', which was held in November, were told that through using their real-life experiences they could help to make real improvements in services.

Hearty Voices is a unique initiative delivered in partnership by British Heart Foundation Scotland and Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland. It provides free training to patients, carers and carer representatives on how to work effectively with health professionals and learn about how the NHS works.

The conference in Clydebank was organised by the charities and the Scottish Health Council.

Speaking at the conference, British Heart Foundation Scotland Director, Marjory Burns, said: "Death rates from heart disease are falling, but more and more people are living with frightening and debilitating illnesses. These people pose a distinct challenge for the Scottish Government, policy makers and



From left, Scottish Health Council Development Manager Rosemary Hill, Suzanna McGregor of the British Heart Foundation, Nicola Cotter of Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland and patient representative Graham Bell

the health service. The views of patients are becoming even more important and it is vital that they are heard."

Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland's Chief Executive, David Clark said, "Through Hearty Voices Scotland our organisation aims to support patients and carers who are willing to get involved with the health professionals by giving them the skills and confidence to influence change and ultimately improve their local cardiac services. So far, we have trained around 150 people across Scotland in the

last 18 months and are hoping this conference will encourage more people to get involved."

Brian Beacom, Chairman of the Scottish Health Council, said: "If health services are to genuinely meet the needs of the public, they need to listen to the people that use those services, and take on board their experiences, good and bad. The Scottish Health Council is committed to working with all groups to ensure people have a real say in health services and we believe that initiatives like 'Hearty Voices' can only further that cause."

Patients log on to Scotland's first Information Pods



Two new innovative patient information systems, the first of their kind in NHS Scotland, have opened for business at two Glasgow healthcare sites.

Known as 'Info' pods, the two new stand alone electronic information points have been designed to provide patients with a range of information at the touch of a button.

The 'Info' pods at Gartnavel General Hospital and Easterhouse Health Centre are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and will allow patients the opportunity to access key information easily at a

single point. If successful the new information systems will be rolled out to other NHS sites across Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

Patients will be able to access information on health issues including healthy eating, exercise, stopping smoking and hand hygiene, as well as relevant bus and train timetables, social work literature, health rights advice and information on services provided by the local Community Health and Care Partnership.

There is also a free standing telephone help-point which allows users to make free, direct calls to

a number of organisations such as a local taxi company, Smokeline and Travel Line.

Peter Hamilton, Chair of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Involving People Committee, said: "This is an exciting project for everyone and we are delighted that through the 'Info' Point we have the opportunity to publicise to patients, visitors and staff the services we provide.

"Anyone using the 'Info' Point will be able to find out important information on a wide range of topics."

As this is a pilot project and the first of its kind one of the most important parts of the project is finding out what everyone thinks of the 'Info' Points - not just the physical layout but also the content.

A face-to-face survey was carried out before the 'Info' pods were put in place with a similar survey being carried out over the coming months to find out exactly what people think.

Independent Scrutiny Panels established

The Scottish Government has established Independent Scrutiny Panels to consider proposed health service changes in Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Lanarkshire and Ayrshire and Arran.

Membership of the Panels reflects a range of expertise. Their role includes assessing whether proposals for service change, developed by NHS Boards, are safe, sustainable, evidence-based and offer value for money, and whether all viable options have been considered.

The Greater Glasgow and Clyde Panel, which was chaired by Professor Angus Mackay, considered the NHS Board's proposals for consultation on a range of service changes in the Clyde area, including mental health and maternity services. It published its findings in December.

Dr Andrew Walker chaired another Panel that considered revised proposals for Accident and Emergency services at Ayr and Monklands Hospital.

It published its final report in January.

More information about the Panels, which receive secretariat support from the Scottish Health Council, is available at www.independentscrutinypanels.org.uk

The Scottish Government finished consulting on its plans to introduce independent scrutiny for all major changes in local NHS services in Scotland in January.

Scottish Health Awards 2007

The Scottish Health Awards 2007 provided an opportunity to recognise some of NHSScotland's most dedicated and innovative staff. Held at the Edinburgh Corn Exchange, the evening's host Kaye Adams, was joined by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing in announcing the 16 Awards Categories.

The event, run in partnership by the Daily Record and the Scottish Government provides an opportunity to recognise the commitment and devotion demonstrated by NHS staff.

Finalists came from across the length and breadth of



Scotland and included Red Cross volunteer, Malcolm Hutchinson, who for 25 years dedicated his weekends to the Edinburgh

Royal Infirmary, and the Perth Royal Infirmary Urology Team who reduced waiting times from 49 days to 10.

Cabinet Secretary attends Scottish Health Council annual review



Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing Nicola Sturgeon told patients, representatives from voluntary groups,

Community Health Partnerships and Public Partnership Forums that the Scottish Health Council is "making a difference,

supporting the mainstreaming of Patient Focus and Public Involvement" at its annual review in October.

In addition to reporting on how well each NHS Board has involved patients in the design and delivery of services, this year the Scottish Health Council has also supported the annual review process throughout Scotland by collating questions from the public and helping to select the patients who meet the Cabinet Secretary or the Health Minister at each review.

In my view

Patient Focus and Public Involvement is seen as a key component in delivering health services that genuinely meet the needs of people. But what does 'Patient Focus and Public Involvement' really mean? Is it something that is already happening, or does more need to be done to give patients a real say in the care they receive? David Clark, Chief Executive of Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland, gives his view.

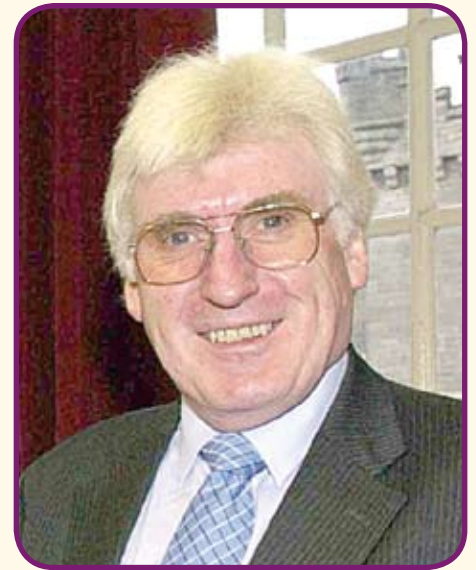
"Patient focus, public involvement' has been a mantra for the NHS in Scotland for at least the last ten years, and is reiterated in the latest policy discussion paper 'Better Health, Better Care'. But what does it mean in practice? How do we turn this very worthy aspiration into concrete benefits for patients and carers?

Firstly, we have to ensure that an environment is established where as wide a range of service users – actual and potential – are involved as possible. A great deal has been achieved by Managed Clinical Networks up and down the country to try to engage patients, carers and the broader public in redesigning services, to meet more closely patients' needs and aspirations. Most of this has been through the medium of Patient Focus and Public Involvement subgroups, but an impressive variety of consultation mechanisms have been developed across Scotland.

Secondly, we have to support lay members of these groups to make the most effective use of their knowledge and experience. This is where initiatives like 'Hearty Voices Scotland' can help. Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland were particularly pleased to receive support from the Health department to enable us to extend this very successful model of support for patient involvement to people affected by stroke and respiratory conditions.

Thirdly, we have to ensure that the NHS actually responds to the views expressed by patients, and the evidence supporting these views. This hasn't always been easy during a period of relatively benign funding settlements, where there's been some scope in areas like coronary heart disease and stroke to expand and develop services; it's likely to become more difficult in future years as finances become tighter and the potential to fund new initiatives reduces. However, there's no point in consulting people if there's no capacity to achieve the change they tell us they'd like to see.

Finally, I'd like to conclude with a brief example of the benefits in practice of listening to patients' and carers' views, and acting on this. In 2000-01, acting on the basis of evidence provided by local service users, Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland commissioned a research study



of the particular problems faced by younger people affected by stroke. Based on the study's recommendations, the Charity applied successfully to the National Lottery to fund a three-year pilot service development to help meet these needs. This was located in Lanarkshire, the region of Scotland with the highest rate of younger people affected by stroke.

Following a positive evaluation, the Charity and the NHS agreed a long-term funding package to keep the service going on a sustainable basis. A valuable service, which is now part of the mainstream provision of support for a particularly disadvantaged group of patients, has been developed and secured in direct response to the expressed wishes of patients and carers – a good example of Patient Focus and Public Involvement in practice."

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- by email
- in large print
- on audio tape or CD
- in Braille, and
- in community languages.

We welcome your comments and views on this newsletter – please contact Rob MacPhail, tel: 0141 225 6992, email: editor@scottishhealthcouncil.org