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Criminal Justice Committee
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
Social Justice and Social Security Committee
Alex Cole-Hamilton, MSP

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21 December 2022

Dear Alex/Relevant committees,

MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT (MAT) STANDARDS

I write following my appearance at the Joint Committee on 24 November 2022 in which I provided an update at an evidence session on reducing drug deaths in Scotland and tackling problem drug use; and also following my statement to Parliament on 13 December 2022 in which I provided an update on progress in implementing the MAT standards and tackling the related workforce challenges.

During both sessions, a question was raised regarding the implementation of MAT Standard 1 and the difficulties that arose in remote and rural areas with people accessing treatment. I advised that I would provide an update on some case studies on what was being done to tackle this issue.

As you will be aware, the MAT Implementation Support Team (MIST) based within Public Health Scotland is working closely with areas to overcome barriers associated with implementation of the standards and the unique challenges of those in remote and rural areas. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the work which they are undertaking in partnership with areas.

Argyll & Bute are looking at moving, in the new year, to a single point of contact self-referral service. The aim of this service will be a link for people raising concerns or if someone is at risk of harm, but also to rapid prescribing. A person can self-refer and the team will follow up using both health and third sector. With You also cover all of the area and can link people to rapid prescribing, with people being booked in or helped to attend such appointments.

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The system will allow a rapid response beyond just rapid prescribing but with links to other support, including recovery communities and support for families. The aim for those wishing rapid prescribing will be to do this within the most available times, depending on prescribing access. MIST will be monitoring this with Argyll & Bute, changing the model to further reduce times people wait and looking at any potential barriers.

With regard to work ongoing in Highland, Inverness can now offer same day prescribing but this has been more of a challenge for areas such as Caithness. MIST is working with Highland on a Quality Improvement piece of work to get the time down to as near to the same day as possible. They are using support workers to attend and support people to attend appointments as near to real time as possible. In addition, each locality within Highland is working on an action plan to meet the individual needs of the communities and of which includes MIST supporting work to engage with Primary care.

MIST have also created a template for remote and rural which is asking each locality to demonstrate that they have attempted to remove any barriers for people by the use of for example, telehealth, transport, voluntary drivers etc.

There is a great deal of work ongoing to overcome the challenges faced by people in our remote and rural communities and I will continue to update Committee and Parliament on the work being undertaken.

I hope you find this update helpful.



ANGELA CONSTANCE, MSP

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