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28 October 2024

Dear Claire and Edward,

TRANSPORT TO HEALTH DELIVERY PLAN

We are writing to share with you the publication of the Scottish Government's Transport to Health Delivery Plan, which will be published on 30 October.

The Delivery Plan has been developed in response to issues raised by the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) on transport to health and social care and a recognition that more needs to be done to bring transport planning and health planning together.

Maximising access is a key area of the Scottish Government vision for health and social care. The plan will contribute to planned reforms through cross-portfolio action and will help ensure that transport to health considerations are built into future plans.

The Delivery Plan will improve the data and evidence available around the issue of transport to health, which will inform future policy within Scottish Government and more widely.

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Background

In December 2019, MACS published their Transport to Health and Social Care report, at the request of Ministers. MACS acknowledged that their report and 27 recommendations were wide ranging. Their report also highlighted the lack of progress on the previously identified actions from reports by Audit Scotland in 2011 and the Healthcare Transport Framework report by a short life working group in 2013.

The Transport to Health Delivery Plan commitments reflect the proposals in the MACS 27 recommendations, within existing structural boundaries.

In February 2020, the National Transport Strategy was published. This was the culmination of a number of years of extensive stakeholder engagement and evidence gathering, and sets 'Improves our Health and Wellbeing' and 'Reduces Inequalities' as two of its four priorities for Scotland's transport system.

A new Accessible Travel Framework Delivery Plan that sets out key priorities for the future of accessible travel in Scotland has been published by Transport Scotland. It lays out key priorities and activities that will be the central focus up to 2026 when the Accessible Travel Framework is due to come to a close. Transport to health is one of the eight workstreams within the Accessible Travel Framework Delivery Plan.

The Transport to Health Delivery Plan is a necessary component of wider health reform, including Primary Care reform, seeking to improve access to physical and digital healthcare services.

The Remote, Rural and Islands task & finish group, established through the (NHS Scotland) Strategic Planning Board, is considering definition of core services to be delivered locally and services to be delivered in collaboration with other Health Boards. Work in progress by this group has shown "transportation issues" to be the most frequently mentioned theme arising from patient and community engagement.

Context

The Transport to Health Plan sets out a framework for commitments across Scottish Government and provides the opportunity for collaborative working across Directorate for Health and Social Care and Transport Scotland.

Officials across Health and Social Care and Transport Scotland will ensure implementation of the delivery plan's commitments alongside ongoing stakeholder engagement.

A programme of engagement with Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) is ongoing. RTPs have indicated they wish to have a formal role in the delivery of the Transport to Health plan. It is recommended that the regional transport strategies and local and regional transport plans set out the role for the RTP in each regional area. Support and guidance to RTPs will be provided through existing channels of engagement.

Officials are working with Directors of Planning from NHS Health Boards who have identified a number of challenges and agreed to continue a dialogue and host further sessions around joint planning, the use of digital, non-emergency patient travel.

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Officials facilitated a tripartite meeting between NHS Shetland, NHS Western Isles and Loganair on 28 March to discuss service reliability and timetabling issues. NHS Boards communicated their concerns and Loganair gave assurances around the work currently underway to improve reliability of their services and set out some of the reasons for service timetabling changes and decisions.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care met with stakeholders in Orkney on 1 August and subsequently convened a meeting in Uist on 21 August to consider the issues in relation to flights. The outcome of these was the establishment of a working group to scope in more detail possible mitigations and improvements.

Next Steps

The Transport to Health Delivery Plan will contribute to the First Ministers aim of Improving public services, directly encouraging bodies to work more closely and more innovatively together to improve patient experience.

The publication of the plan demonstrates our commitment to address challenges in access to health services. Transport to health and social care and we will continue to work closely with the agencies involved, including NHS Boards and RTPs, to ensure effective implementation.

Yours sincerely,



FIONA HYSLOP
Cabinet Secretary for Transport



NEIL GRAY
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

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