May 2017

We wrote to you in November last year on developments relating to the negotiation of the new GMS contract in Scotland and how that fits with our shared vision for wider primary care transformation. We accompanied that letter with a summary document that set out the vision and next steps in some more detail.

Since then, our negotiations continue and the Scottish Local Medical Committee conference was held in March 2017. We both spoke to conference and set out more detail on the increasing investment in general practice and the role it plays in enabling the new role for GPs as Expert Medical Generalists in the community.

The accompanying summary document to this letter updates you on contract negotiation and the announcements made in March. We continue to be acutely aware of the pressures facing general practice. We know additional investment is critical. We have agreed that this additional investment, in direct support of general practice, will reach an extra £250 million per year by 2021 – this is part of the pledge to increase overall annual funding for primary care by £500 million by 2021/22.

We know improvements are needed now – and are committed to improving your working conditions. That is why the contract changes in 2017 include improving sickness pay; better reimbursement for appraisals and workforce survey and a higher rate for the GP Retainer Scheme. And delegates had questions on the Review of Health and Care Public Holiday Services. The Cabinet Secretary made clear that working on public holidays will not be made mandatory for GPs in Scotland.

At conference, the Vaccinations Transformation Programme was also announced. This programme will draw in expertise from across the NHS to review and transform how we deliver vaccinations. This programme will complete within three years. This will help to reduce GP workload once a new model can be safely and sustainably operated within Scotland.

We continue to negotiate wider changes to the GMS contract. We intend these negotiations to complete in 2017 to enable a new contract to be implemented from April 2018. We anticipate fuller details on the new GMS contract to be available in advance of the next LMC conference in December 2017. We are jointly agreed that any proposal to fundamentally change the way GPs are paid is put to a vote following Conference.
Our joint ambition for a new role for GPs as Expert Medical Generalists in the community is for GPs to have more influence in improving the health of local communities. We are hopeful for the future and commit to further communication once negotiations are complete.

Shona Robison

Alan McDevitt