Securing the future of Scotland’s health service

BMA Scotland manifesto for health in the Scottish Parliament elections 2016
The health service in Scotland is facing unprecedented pressures, with increasing demands on the NHS outstripping resources and significant problems in recruiting and retaining medical staff.

BMA Scotland is calling on all political parties to stop using the NHS as a political tool and to make realistic and honest pledges to ensure the future of high quality health care in Scotland.
Address the funding shortfall for health

*Politicians must face up to the reality of the urgent need to close the gap between constrained resources and rising demand. Scotland’s politicians must recognise that without significant additional resources the current model of care is no longer sustainable.*

All parties must be honest with the electorate and state clearly in their manifestos whether they will close the funding gap faced by NHS Scotland or set out what range and models of health services they will realistically pursue with currently planned resources.
Recruit, retain and value doctors

Consultant and GP vacancies are increasing, trainee and specialist posts are going unfilled. Every position that goes unfilled increases the burden on existing medical staff, adding to already unsustainable workloads.

There must be immediate action to make Scotland a more attractive place for doctors to work and ensure that vacant posts are filled.

All NHS boards must be required to adhere to nationally agreed contracts to ensure that Scotland attracts and retains doctors in a global market.
Prioritise the clinical needs of patients

*Doctors are frustrated and impeded by a focus on political priorities and targets in NHS Scotland. It is important that the health service is able to prioritise and respond to clinical advice so that doctors can ensure that resources are optimised to secure the best outcomes for patients.*

Action needs to be taken locally to ensure that senior doctors are able to speak out on behalf of patients, and influence how the services patients need are best provided and sensibly prioritised.

A review of the now outdated approach to targets should be undertaken to ensure that resources in the NHS are not skewed, and that clinical judgement is prioritised.
Prevent ill-health and support self-management

NHS Scotland is facing growing demands for its services, with an ageing population and an increase in chronic conditions across all age groups. Promoting healthy behaviour and personal responsibility at every stage of life, with a focus on reducing health inequality, can help to reduce future demand on the NHS. This is particularly important for children who are forming habits that can last a lifetime.

Personal responsibility for health should be encouraged and adults and children should be educated on the appropriate and best use of healthcare services.

An entitlement to a free portion of fruit or vegetable on every school day should be introduced for all primary school pupils in Scotland.
Morale amongst GPs is at an all-time low and workload intensity is unsustainable. The number of doctors choosing to train as GPs is falling, more GPs than ever are leaving mid-career and senior GPs are choosing to retire early. This is creating service gaps that remaining GPs are struggling to cover. Access to GPs is already being affected and will ultimately impact on the quality of care patients receive.

All parties should commit to working with the BMA to ensure that patients have access to a range of health professionals and to allow GPs to focus their time on those patients with the most complex care needs.