**General practice in Scotland: Your GP cares**

**Background**
Scottish general practice is the cornerstone of the NHS and is at the heart of every community. The family doctor service model we use in Scotland (and the rest of the UK) is widely admired around the world for its equitable, cost effective and leading edge provision of locally accessible, high quality care and doctors remain our most trusted professionals.

However, the environment in which GPs are striving to provide services is increasingly challenging. An increased demand on general practice caused by demographic changes, more complex health needs and transferring some specialist care out of hospitals and into communities is all contributing to unsustainable pressures on the service. These inter-related factors are having a worrying impact on how care is delivered to patients.

“Regardless of which nation of the UK you look at, the challenges and demographic changes facing general practice are the same. We share the frustrations of our colleagues in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and want to work with our respective governments to deliver the best care we can to our patients.”

Dr Alan McDevitt, Chairman BMA’s Scottish GP Committee

In Scotland, general practice is central to the delivery of the Government’s 2020 vision that “everyone is able to live longer, healthier lives at home or in a homely setting” where GPs are central to plan to focus on preventative care and avoidable hospital admissions. GPs are also central to the success of the Government’s plans to deliver integrated adult health and social care services.

**Issues within general practice**
NHS Scotland estimates that around 24 million patient consultations take place in practices across Scotland; this is an increase of around 1.6 million since 2006. Just over 12% of all patients visit their GP practice 10 or more times a year.

Scotland’s population is also growing. By 2033 the population is expected to rise to 5.54 million by 2033. Populations in 19 of the 32 council areas in Scotland are projected to increase, although growth is likely to be unevenly spread. Areas such as East Lothian are expected to grow by 33% and Perth and Kinross by 27%. These population rises, along with increasing stocks of new housing being developed in communities across the country, will create increasing demand on existing general practices where list sizes continue to grow.
The needs of patients visiting their GP practice have also changed. For example, around two million people (40% of the Scottish population) have at least one long term condition.

The number of people aged over 75 will rise by 60% between 2004 and 2031. By the age of 65, nearly two-thirds of people will have developed a long term condition. Whilst 27% of people aged 75-84 have two or more long term conditions.

Long term conditions account for 80% of all GP consultations.

Your GP cares

The BMA’s General Practitioners Committee (representing GPs across the UK) has launched a new campaign, Your GP cares, to highlight some of the pressing issues facing general practice and how they are affecting the care provided to patients. Your GP and practice team care about the current situation and want to work with patients and the governments of all four nations to find solutions and provide a better service. The BMA is calling for sustainable investment in GP services now to:

• Attract, retain and expand GP numbers
• Strengthen the practice staff team
• Improve GP premises

Over the coming months, we will be encouraging debate so that politicians and policy makers understand the urgent need for long term, sustainable investment in GP services now and in the future.

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Find out more and join the campaign at: bma.org.uk/YourGPcares
Tell @BMAScotland on Twitter why you care about your GP practice #YourGPcares

Notes and References

1 A survey of Primary Care Physicians in 11 countries, 2009: Perspective on Care, Costs and Experiences, Schoen, Dibom, Doty, Squires, Peugh, Applebaum, The Commonwealth Fund 2009
2 Ipsos MORI Trust and Confidence Survey Published 15th February 2013 http://www.ipos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/2013_Trust_Topline.PDF
3 NHS ISD Practice Team Information, October 2013