

# **Promoting, supporting and developing public involvement in primary care**

**March 2013**

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# 1 Introduction

1.1 During the past year, the Scottish Health Council has been promoting the importance of involving the public in primary care by sharing approaches, tools and techniques for engagement with general practices and health centre staff across Scotland. Through this work, the Scottish Health Council aims to:

- increase awareness of its role to support and promote public engagement amongst primary care practitioners and staff
- support those practitioners to increase the level of public engagement activities within primary care and
- improve links between primary care and local communities.

1.2 We also aim to increase and develop links with Patient Participation Groups where they exist to promote awareness of the Scottish Health Council and its role to support and 'champion' public involvement. A Patient Participation Group is a patient-led group linked to a local General Practice. Ideally, it will be made up of a group of patients with a variety of social and economic backgrounds, genders and ages. Patient Participation Groups work alongside general practitioners and practice staff to provide a patient perspective on the healthcare services that are offered to the community.

1.3 The concept of having patient-led groups linked to primary and community care providers was first developed by the National Association for Patient Participation (NAPP). The National Association for Patient Participation is an English-based organisation founded in 1978 which promotes and supports patient participation in primary care. In some parts of Scotland, Patient Participation Groups have become an established and recommended method of public engagement in the primary care sector.

1.4 This report captures the range of activities and support which the Scottish Health Council (through its 14 local offices) has provided so far in promoting and encouraging the benefits of public involvement in primary care.

## 2 Support activities - overview

2.1 An NHS circular dated October 2010 and entitled 'Clinical and Staff Governance for General Practice in Scotland' contains a number of recommendations where General Practices should engage with patients. Specifically, it states that General Practices should be able to demonstrate that patient or other lay involvement is welcomed and enabled in all aspects of the delivery and planning of services. The Scottish Health Council has been using the spirit of these recommendations to:

- make contact with and/or visit primary care practices across Scotland to offer our support and expertise in improving links with the public, patients and local communities
- meet with stakeholders such as NHS Board colleagues, General Practice managers (including practice manager associations and networks), primary care development managers etc to develop relationships and promote the range of support which is available from the Scottish Health Council's local offices. Quite often, we tap into primary care practitioners' protected learning time and development events
- discuss support needs for public involvement with primary care staff and managers. Across Scotland, local offices report both a keenness to work with the Scottish Health Council and a willingness to increase public involvement in primary care, and
- share techniques and approaches for effective public engagement using the Scottish Health Council's Participation Toolkit and Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOiCE).

2.2 The **Participation Toolkit** is a Scottish Health Council 'product' which was launched in 2010 and updated in 2012. It is used as an approach to improvement offered to NHS Boards and other stakeholders. The tools and techniques it contains are a collection of engagement and participation approaches many of which have been tried and tested in practice by Scottish Health Council staff as a means of supporting improvement in public involvement activities. The Scottish Health Council's website ([www.scottishhealthcouncil.org](http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org)) contains a range of Participation case studies linked to each of the Toolkit's involvement techniques.

- 2.3 **Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement** is an online community engagement tool developed by the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) based on its Community Engagement Standards which were produced in 2005.

The Scottish Community Development Centre's role is to support best practice in community development by (i) influencing policy by researching issues and contributing to government working groups and committees on related policy issues and (ii) working with agencies and partnerships to achieve effective community engagement and community participation. Scottish Health Council staff in local offices are trained and skilled in the use of VOiCE and have been sharing details with primary care practitioners about how it can be applied to public engagement activities and other projects.

- 2.4 In support of promoting public involvement in primary care, the Scottish Health Council's activities have ranged from conducting local mapping exercises of where Patient Participation Groups exist, development of public involvement improvement plans, presentations on the benefits of public involvement to primary care practices and providing advice on establishing effective involvement structures etc.

### 3 Development activities

- 3.1 Across Scotland, a number of General Practices and health centres have Patient Participation Groups. The Scottish Health Council estimates that out of 1,032 practices in Scotland there are around 151 Patient Participation Groups in existence. It should be noted though that some may not have met for some time and for a variety of reasons. The table below shows an estimated number of Patient Participation Groups in existence across Scotland by NHS Board area.

NHS Board Area	Number of Practices	Number of PPGs
Ayrshire & Arran	40	11
Borders	26	2
Dumfries & Galloway	34	11
Fife	62	2
Forth Valley	62	12
Grampian	82	18
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	277	48
Highland	109	15
Lanarkshire	109	8
Lothian	127	10
Orkney	14	0
Shetland	10	3
Tayside	66	8
Western Isles	14	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,032</b>	<b>151</b>

#### **Patient Participation Group – Start-up Guide for General Practice**

- 3.2 In support of promoting the benefits of Patient Participation Groups to primary care practitioners, the Scottish Health Council has developed a Start-up Guide for General Practice. It is aimed at helping practitioners to improve or widen their current involvement with the public and engagement with communities by establishing a Patient Participation Group in their local community. Staff in local offices have been using the guide to provide advice on how to ensure the group is properly representative; sharing the key steps that should be followed in the

early stages of establishing the group and holding meetings; and providing practical tips for maintaining the momentum of the group.

- 3.3 As a direct result of Scottish Health Council contact and support, a number of new Patient Participation Groups have either been set up or are in the process of being established across Scotland. Currently, we estimate that around 25 practices (possibly more as work progresses) have either developed a new Patient Participation Group or will come on-stream during 2013. This figure will continue to rise as our support and enthusiasm for promoting public involvement and developing Patient Participation Groups continues.

### **Patient Participation Group – Development Tool**

- 3.4 As mentioned earlier, the Scottish Health Council is aware that there are a number of Patient Participation Groups across Scotland which have not met for some considerable time and for a variety of reasons (such as lack of resources, member commitment and so on). To help reinvigorate Patient Participation Groups where it was felt to be needed, the Scottish Health Council created a Patient Participation Group Development Tool to help existing groups to think about ways in which they can contribute effectively to the work of their General Practice. Staff in local offices have been using the Development Tool to help existing Patient Participation Groups identify areas which could be improved or strengthened and enable groups to come up with ideas and solutions so they become more efficient and productive.
- 3.5 Currently, we estimate that around 22 practices (possibly more as work progresses) have received support from local offices to improve or strengthen the way they work. This figure will continue to rise as our support and enthusiasm for promoting public involvement and developing Patient Participation Groups continues.
- 3.6 The Start-up Guide and Development Tool are available to download from the Scottish Health Council's website ([www.scottishhealthcouncil.org](http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org)) and hard copy samples can be obtained from local offices.
- 3.7 Other more 'bespoke' local office activities include:
- designing and running tailored workshops for General Practice managers which aim to 'showcase' tools from the Scottish Health

Council's Participation Toolkit and demonstrate how they might be applied in practice

- ongoing support to primary care practitioners to use the tools and develop other engagement approaches
- working with a Community Health and Care Partnership to support improvement in its Better Together survey results. This involves exploring the key themes from the survey and encouraging members of a newly established Patient Participation Group to assist in developing an action plan. It is anticipated that other GP practices may replicate this model and approach in future
- support in recruiting new members to Patient Participation Groups where numbers may have declined or assisting with re-invigorating existing groups
- assisting primary care practitioners to ensure that Patient Participation Groups are representative of the local community. In some cases this involves 'targeted recruitment' of for example young people, young mothers and the local business community
- raising awareness of existing Patient Participation Groups and 'start-up' advice and guidance in areas where they currently do not exist
- facilitating the sharing of practice amongst Patient Participation Groups and fostering networking arrangements between existing groups
- supporting 'round table' sessions in some of the more remote and rural areas where a different approach to Patient Participation Groups is required
- facilitating local community discussions and dialogue for example between a community council and practice staff on specific topics (such as GP coverage)
- supporting public involvement in the development of primary care services for example securing public input to the design of delivery models and the restructuring of primary care services



- supporting other parts of the public sector to establish a Patient Participation Group such as the Scottish Prison Service.

## **4 Future activities**

- 4.1 The Scottish Health Council is keen to continue working with primary care practitioners in support of their public engagement activities. During 2013/14, we will look at the feasibility and potential of developing Patient Participation Group networking arrangements and, moreover, how some of the innovative practice in public involvement in primary care which the Scottish Health Council has come across can be shared and 'showcased' across Scotland.

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