



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Michael Matheson MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery,  
Health and Social Care

Via email only

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Dear Cabinet Secretary,

### **Electronic patient record**

1. The Committee has recently scrutinised progress by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland towards creating electronic patient records, most notably as part of its:
  - inquiry into [alternative pathways to primary care](#), and
  - scrutiny of the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill, which contains provisions relating to health and social care information in Part 2 of the Bill.

### **Data access for individuals**

2. The Scottish Government's Digital Health and Care Strategy gives a commitment to developing a 'Digital Front Door' for people to use as a single means of access to their health and care information and to health and care services. The [Digital Front Door - Digital Healthcare Scotland](#) website states:

"We are currently agreeing the business and finance case and aim to have the programme available by the end of this parliamentary term."

3. In August 2023, the Scottish Government published its new [Digital Health and Care Strategy delivery plan for 2023-24](#). This document states:

"The 'Digital Front Door' for health and social care will include a range of features allowing people to access, self-manage, and contribute to their own health and social care information online, or through an app, as well as providing information on local health and social care services. The Digital Front Door's development will build upon

the NHS24 app released last year; we expect this to be delivered by the end of the current Parliamentary term.”

4. The document further states that a plan outlining the capability and functions of a fully interactive ‘Digital Front Door’ and establishment of core technology to support the programme will be in place by April 2024.
5. **Please provide more detail on actions undertaken to date to progress the Digital Front Door, and associated key milestones expected for its development and roll-out.**

#### **Data access for professionals**

6. During the Committee’s inquiry into alternative pathways to primary care, witnesses argued that establishing a single electronic record would be transformational in enabling multidisciplinary team working and helping to ensure people consistently get the best care by allowing seamless access between services while eliminating the need for individuals to tell their story multiple times.
7. Across its work, the Committee has heard evidence of significant problems with sharing data between health and social care organisations.
8. The [Scottish Government’s response](#) to the Committee’s report on its inquiry into alternative pathways to primary care stated:

“We continue to work with key partners across Scotland to ensure that information is available to all staff when and where they need it. This includes work to develop Regional Clinical Portals as well as the development of a National Clinical Data Store across Scotland. New GP Practice IT systems are also due to start rolling out in 2022. As part of the Digital Health & Care strategy, a National Digital Platform approach is also bringing together service data that is appropriately accessible to the workforce regardless of where they are based. These projects support interoperability of data sharing between existing electronic systems, and improvement in the quality of electronic information shared amongst clinicians.”

9. In [response](#) to questions related to the Committee’s inquiry into the Complex Mesh Surgical Service, the Minister for Public Health and Women’s Health stated:

“Whilst our strategy is for all health records to be held electronically, this will not result in a single, discrete electronic patient record that maintains all of the data from all of the health and care systems in Scotland in a single platform. Clinical portals are in place across Scotland within acute services and provide access to multiple specialist clinical systems, supporting the better transfer of information between Health Boards and within services.

“This technology places the focus on allowing medical records to be stored, linked and shared securely according to the information needed. Regional Clinical Portals allow clinicians to access different pieces of information about an individual patient as a single electronic record including those patients from other Health Boards if and when required.

“Further key national developments are also underway that will further improve data sharing, such as the GP IT Programme, the National Digital Platform, development of an integrated health and social care record, and the provision of citizen access through the Digital Front Door. This is in addition to local improvements being made by Health Boards and their partners, such as through enhancements to TRAKcare. We continue to work with partners across Scotland to ensure that information, with the appropriate safeguards in place, is available to all staff when and where they need it.”

10. Part 2 of the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill also has provisions relating to health and social care information. Section 36 gives the Scottish Ministers power to establish a scheme for sharing information between NCS and NHS services. It gives the Scottish Ministers’ powers to make records about people’s health and social care more consistent and better integrated. During the Committee’s evidence on the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill, Members also heard from witnesses that local authorities already have information sharing agreements in place.
11. Under priority 2, the Digital Health and Care Strategy delivery plan sets out that the Scottish Government will deliver new digital products and solutions within social care to support national priorities for Proactive and Preventative Care, National Care Service, NHS Recovery and the Healthcare Framework for Care Homes.

**12. Please provide more detail on:**

- **Actions undertaken to date to progress the following:**
  - **GP IT Programme**
  - **the National Digital Platform**
  - **development of an integrated health and social care record**
  - **Regional Clinical Portals**
  - **the National Clinical Data Store across Scotland**
- **Local improvements made by NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships and Local Authorities that have improved data sharing between professionals, and how learning from these has been shared more widely.**
- **What access arrangements are being developed to allow full access to national shared electronic patient care records for:**
  - **community pharmacists**
  - **social care staff**
  - **social work staff**
  - **wider multidisciplinary team members**
- **What information-sharing agreements currently exist across health and social care organisations, including private and third sector providers, what work is currently being undertaken to improve these, and mechanisms for oversight and accountability.**

- **When the Scottish Government anticipates these information sharing agreements will be in place across the entirety of Scotland under a once for Scotland approach.**
- **What new digital products and solutions will be delivered within social care, and how these will be consistently rolled out across multiple providers and sectors.**
- **How the Scottish Government envisages the Digital Health and Care Strategy and delivery plan will link with other upcoming policy and legislative changes, such as the National Care Service.**
- **Details of any risk assessments that were undertaken to inform the development of the Digital Health and Care Strategy and delivery plan.**
- **How the Digital Health and Care Strategy delivery plan will be monitored and evaluated.**
- **Progress with the roll-out of HEPMA (Hospital Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration) to replace paper prescribing and medication administration systems across Scotland.**

13. I would be grateful to receive a response by **7 February 2024** and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "CHaughey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Clare Haughey MSP  
Convener, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee