

media release

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Attn: Newsdesks
Health Correspondents

QUALITY OF OUT-OF-HOURS SERVICES SHOWS “REAL IMPROVEMENT”

EVERY NHS BOARD ACHIEVES ‘REGISTRATION OF SERVICE’

The quality of out-of-hours primary care services have shown “real improvement” and are now of high enough standard to be formally registered under the Primary Medical Services Act 2004, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (NHS QIS) announced today (Monday).

Registration is a requirement of the 2004 legislation that set up the out-of-hours system. In order to achieve registration, out-of-hours services had to meet a stringent set of standards designed to assure quality of care.

The report follows on the back of NHS QIS’s review of services in 2006 which found out-of-hours services were in a state of change, due in part to the infancy of the arrangements. In order to promote continuous quality improvement in the out-of-hours service, NHS QIS initiated a speedy follow-up process, the result of which is this report.

Improvement in out-of-hours services is evident in the following areas:

- All health boards are identifying patient needs by providing written information and involving patients (and families and carers) in service developments and improvements
- Progress is being made to ensure that information on care that is provided out-of-hours is shared with relevant healthcare professionals. This has informed the development of the NHSScotland Emergency Care Summary (ECS), an electronically shared record of care provided out-of-hours and on emergency.

However, challenges do remain, in particular:

- Health boards need to do more to continue to fully integrate out-of-hours services into NHS boards’ clinical governance structures, particularly given the changing nature of the structure of these services
- To aid service improvement, performance indicators that are provider-specific need to be developed and implemented
- All health boards should publish a formal Annual Report on their performance and the services they provide.

Speaking of the report Jan Warner, Director of Patient Safety and Performance Assessment for NHS QIS, said: “Since our last review of out-of-hours services in 2006, we have seen real improvements in the care provided by health boards and GPs out-of-hours. This has meant that, for the first time, every NHS board has now achieved formal registration of their service. This marks an important milestone in their development and a significant source of assurance that these services are up to

scratch. Challenges lie ahead for health boards, but the services appear to be moving in the right direction.”

Note to Editors:

- NHS Quality Improvement Scotland has been established to lead in improving the quality of care and treatment delivered by NHSScotland. To do this, it sets standards and monitors performance, and provides NHSScotland with advice, guidance and support on effective clinical practice and service improvements.
- ‘Out-of-hours’ is defined in legislation as 6.30pm to 8.00am weekdays, weekends and public holidays. Local arrangements may vary.
- The Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Act 2004 placed a duty on NHS boards to provide ‘primary medical services’ for everyone living in the NHS board area. GPs can continue to provide services during the out-of-hours period or can opt-out of providing services during the out-of-hours period on condition that acceptable alternative services can be provided by the NHS board.
- NHSScotland Emergency Care Summary (ECS) is an electronically shared record of care provided out-of-hours and on an emergency. A copy can be obtained by visiting: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/08/16152132/0>.
- A full copy of our Out-of-Hours report is available on our website at www.nhshealthquality.org

Contact: Stephen Ferguson on 07779 329 689