

Health Guidance

Contacting a Medical Practitioner

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This is an information sheet designed to be of assistance to Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) inspectors and others with like interests. The contents have not been issued as SCSWIS policy, but to offer common sense guidance on issues of topical interest which may be of use when reviewing practices and policies.

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Introduction and Purpose of Guidance

SCSWIS often needs to liaise with other professional bodies and individuals in order to fulfil its statutory functions. This guidance is to help SCSWIS Inspectors who might need to contact doctors in the course of their work.

Background

A proportion of the fitness and complaints work managed by the SCSWIS requires that additional information be accessed to provide a source of evidence to support an investigation. Similarly, additional evidence might be needed for assessing the fitness of applicants wishing to register a care service.

The only source of this evidence might be the medical notes held by the GP or hospital doctor, which would contain records of health-related issues that a subject has experienced. Hence the SCSWIS Inspectors, when seeking this type of information, would need to approach a medical practitioner.

Health guidance

1. Prior to making contact with a medical practitioner

Prior to making contact with a medical practitioner, it is mandatory to seek the subject's written permission, clarifying that it was acceptable for the doctor's advice to be sought in the matter. Once this is obtained, preliminary contact can be made by the SCSWIS Inspector. If the information required is envisaged to be particularly complex, the advice of the Medical Professional Adviser can be sought prior to making contact. In the Medical Adviser's absence, the Operations/Development Manager, Healthcare can be contacted.

2. Making contact with a medical practitioner

- You may need to make a telephone call or face to face appointment to speak to a particular doctor.
- Explain the purpose of the SCSWIS's work and your role within regulation.
- Prepare a list of questions to ask – the Medical Professional Adviser will be able to advise here.
- Outline the specific reason for making contact and inform the doctor that the written consent of the subject has been obtained. Make sure you have it with you so the doctor can be satisfied of its content.
- The doctor is likely to confine any answers to the facts available and is unlikely to offer opinions or conjecture. Particular details should be readily available and shared as appropriate, for example confirmation of how long the subject has been a member of the practice, details about particular illnesses suffered and treatments given, appointments attended , referral to other doctors etc.

- Blood tests or other relevant factual results could be shared, with the doctor putting the results into lay terms if possible.
- The doctor should be able to give the SCSWIS Inspectors an overview of any illness etc in layman's terms to help with understanding.
- Following the interview, inform the doctor that you may need to contact again for additional information or clarification of any matters.
- Take plentiful notes throughout the interview and record the meeting on PMS.

The role of the Medical Adviser, IHD

On occasion, the complexities of the case may require the Medical Adviser to contact the doctor directly. If in doubt, the SCSWIS Inspectors should contact the Medical Adviser to discuss the case prior to making contact with other medical professionals.

Summary

Contacting a doctor in the course of SCSWIS work is common. The majority of cases will be dealt with directly by the SCSWIS Inspectors.

The medical adviser can support SCSWIS Inspectors in preparing to make contact with a medical practitioner.

In complex cases, the Medical Adviser should be contacted for advice prior to making contact with another medical practitioner.

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