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Lewis Macdonald
Convenor
Health and Sport Committee
M1.04
Scottish Parliament
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Dear Lewis,

I am writing to provide the Committee with an update on plans for sexual health services in Scotland.

As you will be aware from 20th March 2020, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, sexual health services were necessarily limited to urgent and essential care only during lockdown.

In order to support the recovery and renewal of sexual health services as we move through the phases out of lockdown, the Scottish Government, following discussions with the Scottish Health Protection Network, will be developing an Interim Sexual Health and Blood Borne Viruses Framework. This will act as a bridge to the development of a new long-term Framework to follow on from the Framework currently in place, which covers the period from 2015-2020. Developing an Interim Framework at this point will enable us to take stock of the impacts of COVID-19 on sexual health, and seek to build on the many examples of innovation and best practice that have developed during the pandemic to transform sexual health services in the future.

Over the past few months, significant efforts have been made to maintain care provision to meet public health priorities such as preventing unplanned pregnancies and onward transmission of sexually transmitted infections and blood borne viruses. In responding to the major challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been significant and rapid service redesign in order to prioritise essential care while protecting patients and staff, with care being provided virtually where possible, including through the use of telephone or video consultations and assessments, postal testing kits and self-test kits. While born from necessity, these positive developments offer opportunities to make long-term improvements to services with lasting benefits, and our Interim Framework will aim to identify how those can be realised.

I hope this is helpful and would be happy to provide any further details to the Committee.

JOE FITZPATRICK

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