

## **REQUESTS FOR PERSONAL MEDICAL INFORMATION BY HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS**

Housing is closely related to health in many ways. Good housing is vital to good health and improvements in housing have certainly been one of the main causes of improvements in health in Glasgow.

However, limits on resources mean that there is almost always a waiting list for re-housing. It is obvious that there needs to be a system to give priority to re-housing those in greatest need. As part of this process an individual's health status needs to be considered. This has led to frequent requests for medical information by Housing Associations from patients' General Medical Practitioners. As there are many different housing organisations within the West of Scotland the requests for information about a single patient can be multiple within a short space of time.

Often patients themselves are perfectly able to provide a description of their medical problems and how these affect their housing needs. This has the advantage that the information is given to the housing organisation in lay terms which should be easily understood by the non-medical staff who assess their relative priority. There should only rarely be a need to approach the GP for a more detailed report. A system like this has been operated very successfully by Glasgow Housing for many years.

The NHS does not fund medical reports by GPs for housing organisations and GPs should charge a fee for such reports, as is done for any other private medical report. GPs have no wish to provide reports where the information can be easily obtained from the individual themselves. Patients should not have to pay for reports to housing organisations when they can, in most cases, provide the necessary information themselves.

The routine request for a medical report for every individual who applies for housing simply adds to the ever increasing burden of paperwork which detracts from the time GPs can spend on their patients.

A more efficient system of self reporting of medical and functional problems by applicants for housing will reduce the administrative burden on the NHS and allow an equally effective prioritisation of housing provision.

Glasgow GPs are therefore advised not to routinely provide Housing Organisations with medical reports.

**Glasgow Local Medical Committee April 2015**