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Chief Executives (NHS Boards)  
Chief Executives (Local Authorities)  
Directors of Social Work (Local Authorities)  
General Medical Services Leads

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Dear Colleague,

## **REDUCING PAPERWORK IN GENERAL PRACTICE**

You may be aware of the UK Cabinet Office report **'Reducing General Practitioners' Paperwork'** (2001) and subsequent report **'Making a Difference: Reducing Burdens on General Practice'** (2002). These reports promoted a range of recommendations to help GPs provide more efficient care, which included reducing the amount of time spent on administrative duties.

This letter serves to re-emphasise that the Scottish Government continues to support the idea that to achieve faster and better GP services, GPs should spend less time on unnecessary administration, including the administrative needs of other organisations, thus freeing up time to focus on patient care.

In order to be clear, it should be noted that GPs are required under the General Medical Services contract to provide certain administrative duties necessary for welfare and other state purposes. Under normal circumstances, GPs must issue free of charge to a patient or their personal representative, any medical certificate described in Annex A.

However, GPs may decide to provide administrative duties outside of these obligations, such as in the case of local authority schemes, but they are not required to do so. Further, they are within their rights to charge a fee for such services should they agree to undertake them.

It is hoped this letter helps to clarify the Scottish Government's position and the arrangements that exist within the General Medical Services contract.

Yours sincerely,

DAVID NOTMAN  
Head of General Medical Services.

LIST OF PRESCRIBED MEDICAL CERTIFICATES<sup>1</sup>

Description of Medical Certificate	Short title of enactment under or for the purpose of which certificate required
To support a claim or to obtain payment either personally or by proxy; to prove inability to work or incapacity for self support for the purposes of an award by the Secretary of State; or to enable proxy to draw pensions etc.	Naval and Marine Pay and Pensions Act 1865 Air Force (Constitution) Act 1917 Pensions (Navy, Army, Air Force and Mercantile Marine) Act 1939 Personal Injuries (Emergency Provisions) Act 1939 Pensions (Mercantile Marine) Act 1942 Polish Resettlement Act 1947 Social Security Administration Act 1992 Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 Social Security Act 1998
To establish pregnancy for the purpose of obtaining welfare foods.	Section 13 of the Social Security Act 1988 (schemes for distribution etc of welfare foods)
To secure registration of still birth.	Section 21 of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965 (special provision as to registration of still birth)
To enable payment to be made to an institution or other person in case of mental disorder of persons entitled to payment from public funds.	Section 142 of the Mental Health Act 1983 (pay, pensions etc of mentally disordered persons)
To establish unfitness for jury service.	Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 Court of Session Act 1988
To support late application for reinstatement in civil employment or notification of non-availability to take up employment owing to sickness.	Reserve Forces (safeguarding of Employment) Act 1985
To enable a person to be registered as an absent voter on grounds of physical incapacity.	Representation of the People Act 1983
To support applications for certificates conferring exemption from charges in respect of drugs, medicines and appliances.	National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978
To support a claim by or on behalf of a severely mentally impaired person for exemption from liability to pay the Council Tax or eligibility for a discount in respect of the amount of Council Tax payable.	Local Government Finance Act 1992 Schedule 1, paragraph 2(1)(b)

<sup>1</sup> As listed in the Standard General Medical Services Contract