Ms K Lang

Our ref: 2012/0007138
March 2012

Dear Ms Lang

Thank you for your email of 23 February 2012 to Michael Matheson MSP, Minister for Public Health about podiatry services for the elderly. I have been asked to reply.

Firstly, I appreciate that you are concerned with ensuring that patients and the public have access to high quality footcare, as well as to the highest standards of podiatric practice as required by the HPC and by health and care employers across Scotland. I can assure you that quality is also the primary concern of the Scottish Government as set out in our Healthcare Quality Strategy for NHS Scotland. Such issues are therefore the priority and focus of work undertaken by both the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland on our behalf, as they visit and inspect health and care organisations and services where footcare and podiatric services are also delivered.

However, it is important to clarify the difference between personal footcare and clinical podiatry:

**Personal footcare**

Personal footcare (sometimes called routine/basic/simple footcare), includes the tasks that adults normally do for themselves, such as: cutting and filing toenails, smoothing and moisturising skin, looking for signs of infections or other problems which need referral to a podiatrist. It also includes advice about suitable safe footwear. If a person is unable to carry out these tasks on their own, they can be carried out by a carer, relative, volunteer, or other assistant, including a foot health practitioner. These tasks do not need to be carried out by a podiatrist, however the person carrying them out will benefit from suitable education and advice about how to do it safely. Many NHS podiatry departments provide education and training for carers, relatives etc on how to do this safely, how to spot problems and when it is appropriate to refer to a podiatrist. The Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists support this approach and the Scottish Government has established a working group to develop national guidelines and educational resources for personal footcare in Scotland. These will include educational resources for carers and other staff providing personal footcare in care homes.