

Subject: Release of 'Better, Sooner, More Convenient Health Care in the Community' booklet

One of the greatest strengths of New Zealand's health services is the wealth of experience and dedication in primary health care - the thousands of highly skilled GPs, nurses, pharmacists and others based in our communities.

It has long been acknowledged that these professionals usually have the best understanding of the health needs of the patients they serve – a relationship we seek to protect through the concept of 'continuity of care'.

There is also a growing recognition that those health professionals have the best understanding of the health needs of the communities they serve - with valuable insights into what approaches will best meet those needs.

The Ministry of Health is now giving more freedom and flexibility to groups of clinicians working in primary care to design local solutions which address local need.

We began this process by loosening up some of the rules on how the funding provided to primary care can be used – recognising that one-size-fits-all approaches do not always meet the needs of diverse communities.

Changes and innovations are beginning to occur, some examples of which can be seen in a new booklet we've just published which you can download (see link below).

This booklet looks at recent innovations which deliver better services to patients by using fresh approaches, flexibility and collaboration.

The booklet also contains numerous examples of growing cooperation between frontline services in the community and their secondary care counterparts. One of our key challenges as a Ministry is to foster integration across the whole sector – to enable those working in both the primary and secondary sectors to work more collaboratively and to share information and ideas. This type of collaboration is becoming more common with this new, more flexible, approach.

This new approach also ensures New Zealand's most experienced and qualified clinicians are able to spend more time helping people with the most complex health needs to stay healthier for longer in their community.

I recommend that you read *Better, Sooner, More Convenient Health Care in the Community* (<http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/better-sooner-more-convenient-health-care>), and please feel free to pass this link on to others who may find it to be of interest.

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