

Five things you need to know today



**Reform Scotland wants more information for patients –
Whalebone Arch campaign – Edinburgh Tenants Federation –
Spokes Competition – TERLive! events**

Bigger catchment areas and better information will give people more power to choose their GP

Reform Scotland, the independent, non-party think tank which sets out ways to improve public services, has made a number of recommendations it believes could help end the current “postcode lottery” it has identified in the way people access their GP practice.

Depending on where you live, the report states that the way you can access GP services can be quite different. For example, whether the practice is open in the evening or at weekends, whether the practice allows you to book appointments or order repeat prescriptions online, or indeed whether the practice even has a website. And, crucially, this system is a lottery because patients have very little choice over the GP practice with which they can register.

As a result, in its latest paper, [“Patients First: Improving access to GP practices”](#) Reform Scotland makes a series of practical recommendations which will increase the power of patients and ensure that access arrangements for GP practices meet their needs. The group believes this is fundamental as

GPs are the gatekeepers to the NHS, and patients need to be able to access care speedily and conveniently.

Commenting on the paper, Reform Scotland Director Geoff Mawdsley said:

“Reform Scotland believes that it is simply unacceptable that there is such a wide variation in the way people can access GP services, whilst there is little or no choice over where they can register.

“To help give patients greater choice over their GP practice, we believe catchment areas should be enlarged. Expanding the catchment area would put no extra pressure on GP practices as they would still be able to close their lists to new patients if they reached capacity. In practice, many people would still prefer to join the practice closest to them. However, by enabling patients to move and go elsewhere if they are unhappy with the way they can access services where they are; there is greater pressure on all GP practices to improve.

“During the completion of this report Reform Scotland was frequently frustrated by the lack of information easily available to the public regarding GP services. Basic information regarding access arrangements for GP practices, including catchment areas, should be far more widely publicised to ensure patients have a far greater understanding of what services and choices are available to them. Even without introducing the recommendations in this report, some patients do have a limited choice over their GP, but that choice is pointless if they are unable to find out what they can choose between.

“We believe that our recommendations are sensible, practical and, most importantly, easily introduced.

“No service is perfect, but it is very telling that the top five negatively-rated issues in the Scottish government’s GP survey were all to do with how patients accessed services.

Reform Scotland believes the recommendations we have set out in this report are a step in the right direction and would help improve that experience for patients.”

There is a campaign to save the Whalebone Arch in The Meadows which dates from the Exhibition of Science and Art in 1886 according to [Edinburgh World Heritage](#). If you feel moved to donate money then you can find out more information on their website, but this is a relatively modest fundraiser as they need £60,000 to remove the jawbones, restore the foundations etc and then replace them again.

Is fuel poverty on the increase? The Edinburgh Tenants Federation meeting tonight will include representatives from Scottish Gas to discuss this important issue. Today – Monday 3rd September 2012, 7pm-9pm in Norton Park.

Contact the office on 0131 475 2509 or email info@edinburghtenants.org.uk to book a place.

Spokes are running a competition which ends on Sunday 9 September 2012. Great prizes to be won! This is what they say [on the Spokes website](#):-“We want to know where you love to go, or be at, or pass through, with your bike. It must be somewhere or something you can do, visit or experience *in Edinburgh or the Lothians and with your bike*.

It could be a view, a downhill swoop, a picnic spot, somewhere with a lovely smell, a cafe, something unusual, maybe something more abstract, or doubtless loads of other things – we’d like a few surprises! Note that we want a favourite place, not a ride [although your favourite place might be on your favourite ride].”

TERLive ran an event on Saturday with the people [behind Pedal on Parliament](#) discussing what they really mean by safety measures on our roads and streets.

Tomorrow at 2pm we will be running a live webchat [with Chief Inspector Richard Thomas](#) about Operation Cipher in the Calders which is part of the Pentlands area that he is responsible for. Join us!