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## Primary care plans still obscure after year's debate



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2 minutes to Read



The Ministry of Health is leading work “to drive the changes needed” in primary care

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Primary care providers, partners and stakeholders have been providing input into Health New Zealand's primary care development programme

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Health minister Shane Reti appears to be pushing on with work his Labour predecessor Ayesha Verrall began on reshaping primary care – work dismissed as “aspirational drivel” by a sector leader last year.

Concrete plans are still months away.

Ministry of Health officials advised Dr Reti in April on “setting the direction for primary and community healthcare”, according to a list of items of advice he has received on primary care and general practice. The list was obtained by *New Zealand Doctor Rata Aotearoa* under the Official Information Act.

Other interesting items on the list include “early insights from the Review of Urgent Care and After-Hours Services”, and “proposed work programme to improve primary and community healthcare outcomes”. Some items on the list have been released, such as the report, *Primary Care Deep Dive*, and *New Zealand Doctor* is seeking others that have not.

It was General Practitioners Aotearoa interim chair Buzz Burrell who dismissed the plans in Dr Verrall's August primary care Cabinet paper as "well-meaning, aspirational drivel".

Dr Reti was unavailable for an interview on his own plans for the future of primary care, responding by email instead. He says the recently released Government Policy Statement on Health is an important factor in setting the direction of primary care. The ministry is leading work "to drive the changes needed to achieve more comprehensive and accessible primary and community healthcare to better prevent ill health and support wellbeing".

The ministry will advise him in the months ahead on future operating and funding models for primary and community care.

"As part of its primary care development programme, Health New Zealand is looking at the future functions required of PHOs. Primary care providers, partners and stakeholders have been providing input into Health New Zealand's primary care development programme.

“Community involvement in health service planning, with local solutions to local health challenges, will remain essential to the delivery of health services. These local groups should be involved in the design and delivery of services, so the healthcare focuses on the needs of, and is effective for, the community.”

The email doesn't mention localities. Dr Reti has permanently halted the development of new localities but has not defined the future of the 12 prototype localities begun under Labour.

He does say iwi Māori partnership boards will be “facilitated to do more”. He wants them to be part of the Te Whatu Ora health service commissioning process, but the actual procurement, funding and contract management will be done by Te Whatu Ora, not the boards.

The “more” Dr Reti wants of iwi Māori partnership boards includes a role in monitoring services. However, the boards are already required “to monitor the performance of the health sector in a relevant locality” under the Pae Ora (Healthy Futures) Act 2022.

## List of advice on primary care received by health minister Shane Reti

7 Dec 2023	After hours services
19 December	Manifesto commitment – Immunisation Incentive Payments Plan
15 Jan 2024	Supporting Material for Primary and Community Healthcare Deep Dive
15 January	Primary Care Deep Dive
29 January	Funding support to improve immunisation and other priority primary care outcomes in Budget 2024
2 February	Decision on National Hauora Coalition application to transition practices under the PHO Services Agreement
9 February	Investing in timely access to quality general practice services
9 February	Overview of telehealth services
13 February	Introductory meeting with GPNZ chair and CEO
14 February	Comprehensive Primary Care Teams Update
15 February	Meeting with GenPro
16 February	Proposed work programme to improve primary and community healthcare outcomes
22 February	Meso-layer Work Programme
7 March	Information on Community Pharmacy
8 March	PHO Funding
22 March	Follow up to your 19 February meeting with GenPro
11 April	Meeting with GenPro
16 April	New Zealand Telehealth Services   Whakarongorau Aotearoa
19 April	Early Insights from Review of Urgent Care and After Hours Services
30 April	Setting the direction for primary and community healthcare
6 May	Meeting with General Practice Leaders Forum
27 May	Meeting with PHO Chairs and CEOs

Source: OIA response from the office of the minister of health

List of advice on primary care received by health minister Shane Reti

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