



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE01568](#)

Main Petitioner: Catherine Hughes

Subject: Funding, access and promotion of the NHS Centre for Integrative Care

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that Scotland-wide access to the NHS Centre of Integrative Care (NHS CIC) is restored by providing national funding for a specialist national resource for chronic conditions, to uphold NHS patient choice and cease the current postcode lottery by removing barriers to patient access and prevent institutional discrimination by helping to promote the benefits of this care pathway for patients with long-term conditions.

Introduction

The NHS Centre for Integrative Care (CIC) is located at Gartnavel Hospital in Glasgow and is operated by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. The CIC combines conventional treatments with other holistic approaches such as homoeopathy, acupuncture, counselling and dietary advice.

Most patients referred to the CIC are experiencing chronic pain, chronic low energy, and/or chronic low mood or anxiety. However, any patient with a long term condition may be referred.

One of the services of the CIC is the provision of inpatient integrative care beds. The CIC is the successor of the Homoeopathic Hospital in Glasgow which has been a part of the NHS in Glasgow since the NHS was founded in 1948. The inpatient service is the only one of its kind in the UK and the centre can take referrals from all over Scotland.

Background to the petition

The petitioner is concerned about the future of the CIC. The use of homoeopathy in the NHS is controversial due to questions around its evidence base. As a result, some NHS boards in Scotland have taken the decision to stop funding homoeopathy altogether, including referrals to the CIC in Glasgow. These boards are NHS Highland, NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Lothian. NHS Lothian's decision to withdraw funding for homoeopathy is

currently subject to a judicial review. The ruling is expected in the coming months.

The future of the CIC was also under threat in 2005 but, following a review of the inpatient service¹, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde made a commitment to retain the service. However a recent press release from the board stated:

“...we are reliant on the ongoing commitment from other Boards to make use of the inpatient services to maintain their viability.”²

The 2005 review detailed that patients from other board areas constituted 45% of the centre’s workload.

The recent statement also stated that any changes which may arise as a result of funding decisions by other NHS Boards would be the subject of full consultation with staff and patients. To date, the board has not announced that is considering any changes to the service.

National Services

Scotland already has some national services which are commissioned by the National Services Division (NSD) of the NHS. The NSD [website](#) explains that national commissioning is reserved for very specialist services where local or even regional commissioning is not appropriate. Such services are generally those concerned with the diagnosis and/or treatment of rare conditions.

Applications to become a nationally commissioned service are considered by the National Specialist Services Committee. The NSD website outlines [the process for applying](#) and details that applications can be made by:

- Clinicians and/or hospitals with the backing of their NHS board
- NHS boards
- Regional planning groups
- National groups

Scottish Government Action

The previous Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, Alex Neil MSP, was quoted at a public meeting as saying:

"Anyone who is worried about the [CIC] closing, there is no prospect of us allowing that centre to close."³

At another meeting, the then Cabinet Secretary was reported to have suggested that the new national chronic pain centre could be located at the

¹ NHS Greater Glasgow (2005) [Future of inpatient homeopathic services](#).

² NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde (9 December 2014) Media Statement: NHS Lanarkshire to no longer fund inpatient homeopathic treatment.

³ The Herald (19 November 2013) [Minister vows to protect homeopathic hospital’s future](#).

CIC⁴. Since then, the Scottish Government has announced⁵ that the national centre for chronic pain will be sited at Gartnavel Hospital but the exact location has not yet been decided and it is unclear what links, if any, it will have with the CIC.

Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not undertaken any specific work in this area.

Kathleen Robson
Senior Research Specialist
01 June 2015

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Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP www.scottish.parliament.uk

⁴ BBC News (17 Feb 2014) [Glasgow homeopathic hospital tipped to be pain centre.](#)

⁵ Scottish Government (23 June 2014) [National service for chronic pain.](#)