

PE1105/EEE

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The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
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Dear David

Consideration of Public Petition PE1105 on the St Margaret of Scotland Hospice

Thank you for your letter of 3 October 2012 on behalf of the Public Petitions Committee regarding Petition PE 1105 on the St Margaret of Scotland Hospice.

It is clear from Ms Mitchell's letter and the discussions at the recent Public Petitions Committee meeting on the 18 September 2012, that Committee members continue to have concerns regarding the local funding arrangements for palliative care provision between the St Margaret of Scotland Hospice and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and whether this can be resolved through the implementation of the published Scottish Government guidance on hospice funding arrangements in May 2012.

As you will know, on 3 August 2012 Mr Mark O'Donnell, Acting Head of Planning and Quality Division, responded to the Public Petitions Committee setting out the position of the Scottish Government on this issue.

Mr O'Donnell clarified that it is the duty of the Scottish Government to provide policies, frameworks and resources to NHS Boards, in order that they can deliver services that meet the needs of their local population. Additionally as each NHS Board has different specific local needs, it is for individual NHS Boards to decide how best to deliver high quality, safe and sustainable services to meet the needs of their local population.

Therefore, as I am sure you can appreciate, it would be inappropriate for me to intervene directly in, or comment on operational matters or local funding arrangements relating to individual NHS Boards.

I understand that this view is shared by the Committee, and was reflected in the discussion of the Public Petitions Committee meeting of 8 March 2011, where it was confirmed that the funding arrangements for palliative care provision between the St Margaret of Scotland Hospice and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde should be resolved locally.

Having said that I am unhappy that this particular dispute has still not been resolved. The Scottish Government has contacted the Board to request that every attempt is made to resolve this dispute as soon as possible and to advise by the end of January 2013 if it has not been able to reach an agreement. I would like to take this opportunity to provide reassurance to the Committee that through the implementation of our guidance on hospice funding arrangements, Chief Executive Letter CEL 12(2012), we expect NHS Boards and independent adult hospices, including NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and the St Margaret of Scotland Hospice, to work together to develop a structured partnership approach to commissioning mutually agreed specialist palliative care services.

It is important to recognise that there was senior staff representation from the St Margaret of Scotland Hospice on the short life working group that developed and agreed the content of the CEL before it was published.

The CEL makes it clear that NHS Boards should draw upon a common and consistent approach to commissioning when developing longer-term partnerships and commissioning cycles with independent adult hospices, and that both NHS Boards and independent adult hospices should ensure that progress is made over the course of 2012-13 to support the implementation of the recommendations in the guidance.

It should be noted that inevitably there will be a period of transition before the guidance becomes fully embedded and as such it is not anticipated that all local matters would be resolved at this early stage. However, it is expected that all NHS Boards with independent adult hospices will have new arrangements in place to inform funding for 2013-14 onwards.

I hope the information contained in this letter provides some reassurance that we remain committed to working towards a resolution of the issues in the petition.

ALEX NEIL