

PE1105/FFF

6 February 2013

Ms Alison Wilson
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Ms Wilson

Consideration of Petition PE1105

Thank you for forwarding the responses from both Mr Alex Neil, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Well-being (2 November 2012) and the statement from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (author unknown).

I welcome the opportunity to respond to points raised in both the letter and statement.

It dismays me to find that Mr Neil has replied "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." Who should St Margaret of Scotland Hospice turn to in the situation where the NHS Board effectively refuses to recognise the disparity in funding between one Hospice and other Hospices under the same Health Board? There has been no resolution to the dispute to which the Cabinet Secretary refers.

The Petition, as the Committee members are well aware, has been regularly raised in the Parliament since it was presented there in December 2007. During the past five years, the Hospice has sought to understand the funding rationale of NHS GG&C in relation to the services it provides and in comparison to the funding of the services of other local Hospices.

In a recent Freedom of Information request which I made to NHS GG&C, I asked the following question:

"Please confirm how much funding is individually attached to each core service and specifically how much funding is attached to each bed at each of NHSGGC 6 Hospices and how this is reflected in numbers of patients receiving care?"

The response which came back from NHS GG&C confirmed:

"As stated above NHS funding is allocated to 50% of agreed costs, and is not broken down by specific service elements or bed numbers. Under section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 I must notify you that this information is not held by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde."

The Petitions Committee received the following statement from NHS GG&C:

“We would confirm that NHS Board funds 50% of the agreed service costs of St Margaret of Scotland Hospice and on this basis treats the Hospice equitably with the five other Hospices in the area.” Where is the equity in funding if it is not broken down by specific service elements or bed numbers? If one Hospice is more efficiently run than another, of course its costs will be less. This is where a robust benchmarking exercise is required across Scottish Hospices. In addition, the financial situation for St Margaret of Scotland Hospice has worsened over the past five years.

It is important to note that whilst there was representation from St Margaret of Scotland Hospice on the group which prepared the guidance for CEL 12 (2012), the representative was not in agreement with the difference the CEL would make in relation to the continuing disparity in funding for St Margaret of Scotland Hospice. This was made clear in my letter to the Petitions Committee last year (31 January 2012) “The Commissioning Group has by no means reached any conclusion and the draft CEL requires to be substantially revised if it is to bring any comfort to Hospices, individually or collectively, in terms of Hospice funding arrangements. We do however recognise the challenge surrounding the HDL may be unique to St Margaret of Scotland Hospice as the current baseline funding to the Hospice is significantly less than the other NHSGG&C Hospice and the wider Scottish Hospices.” The benchmarking exercise which forms part of the commissioning approach in CEL 12 (2012) is welcomed – as I stated last year “...at present, discussions with Health Boards do not achieve this level of consistency in relation to individual Hospice funding.” The work which was carried out on CEL 12 (2012) was effectively updating and refreshing of terminology. No substantive changes were made to funding arrangements in the guidelines despite vociferous representations by the St Margaret of Scotland Hospice representative in this regard.

The dispute in relation to funding arrangements, to which Mr Neil refers in his letter, remains unresolved. The contract for the secure future of the services the Hospice provides for the Care of the Older Adult and Specialist Palliative Care, in addition to the funding arrangements, remains unsigned.

I am especially grateful to the Petitions Committee for considering this Petition over this period of time and wish to request that it remains open until the Hospice’s situation is resolved.

Yours sincerely

Jean Anne Mitchell
Petitioner