

Mr Eddie Docherty
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Dear Eddie

NHS Lanarkshire
Review of Homeopathy Services and Referrals to the Centre for Integrative Care

Thank you for sharing information on the review of Homeopathy and associated services provided by the Centre for Integrative Care (CIC) for NHS Lanarkshire. It is our understanding that the consultation sought views and feedback on referring patients to the Centre for Integrative Care, using the question “Should NHS Lanarkshire refer patients to the Centre for Integrative Care?”

Whilst the focus of initial research was on Homeopathy, the scope of NHS Lanarkshire’s consultation has also included consideration of other services and arrangements in place at the CIC.

If the Board decides to cease referrals to the CIC, based on the information you have shared with us, we have considered whether this proposed change would be likely to meet the general threshold for ‘major change’. This has included reviewing the potential impact whilst taking account of decisions about other similar changes in recent years.

We acknowledge the high number of responses (6,024) to the Board’s consultation survey and that the significant majority (80.6%) were in support of services provided at the CIC. We also recognise the strength of feeling and concern that this proposal may have for patients, many of whom have a long-term condition or disability (of a recent survey of 107 patients, 69% identified themselves as having a disability or long-term). Data shows that patient satisfaction with the service is almost 100%, with 90% reporting improvement with their health difficulties.

However, we agree with your conclusion that this is not likely to meet the threshold for major service change. In particular we have taken account of the following:

- decisions about similar changes that have taken place elsewhere
- the number of patients affected is relatively small with 148 new outpatients, 105 inpatients and 17 daycases (2012-2013)
- treatment plans will continue for existing patients

- those services provided at the CIC that are proven to be clinically effective will still be available to new patients through existing mainstream services eg Acupuncture.

Proposed Next Steps

NHS Lanarkshire should demonstrate how people's responses have been listened to, considered and influenced any decision taken. To ensure robustness, NHS Lanarkshire should review the themes from the patient and public feedback and identify how these may influence the recommendation to the Board. Areas that we have identified as requiring further attention include:

- The equality impact assessment states that the proposal will benefit patients – however this is not clearly illustrated. It is our view that the equality impact assessment does not reflect the disproportionate impact of people with long-term conditions and disabilities and how this will be mitigated.
- A review of CFS-ME (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome-Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) was undertaken by the Board in 2013, which resulted in a number of recommendations. It may be helpful to demonstrate how improvements have been taken forward.

If a decision is taken to cease referrals, we would suggest the Board should:

- Consider how services in mainstream care can be co-ordinated to ensure a person-centred pathway for those patients who need referral to a number of different services eg one referral for a package of therapies/treatments, all on one site. This approach should take into account views from patients, carers and relevant organisations.
- Ensure that information explicitly states which services will cease and which will be available through other referral pathways eg Mistletoe Therapy.
- Clarify if GPs will continue to prescribe homeopathic remedies for those patients who currently receive these on repeat prescription.
- State how it will use any potential savings released from this service.

In forming our view we have taken into account information currently available to us. If the developments, information or proposals change and in particular, if it emerges that there is greater patient and/or public concern than currently anticipated, I would ask that you contact us at the earliest opportunity as it may be appropriate to review this position.

The points raised represent the view of the Scottish Health Council and any final decision on whether changes to services should be considered major rests with the Scottish Government.

Yours sincerely

Louise Wheeler
Service Change Advisor