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Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Government
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP



15 May 2013

Dear David,

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC PETITION ON ACCESS TO INSULIN PUMPS

I am aware that there have been some questions raised over when NHS Highland will deliver on our commitment to ensure that 25% of people under 18 years living with type 1 diabetes will receive insulin pump therapy. And that by March 2015, NHS Boards will almost triple the number of pumps available to people of all ages with type 1 diabetes to more than 2000. I thought it be helpful at this stage to provide clarification of this issue.

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify that the information I provided at the Public Petitions Committee meeting of the 14 May 2013 was taken from reports provided by individual NHS Boards on the status of their insulin pump services at the end of March 2013.

In NHS Highland's original action plan that was submitted on the 17th May 2012 there was a table for paediatric insulin pump starts which was divided up over 3 years and reflected their local initiation plan. This indicated that the target would not be met until around 2015. On the back of this and their poor quarterly report in August 2012 the Minister wrote to all Boards emphasising that the commitment must be met.

Further to that a letter from John Connaghan, Director of Workforce and Performance to the Chief Executive of NHS Highland, Elaine Mead on the 6th March 2013 reiterated that, once the Board's latest trajectory and action plan was received, the Scottish Government would consider "what further enhanced performance management support is necessary in order that your Board meets this target".

With regard specifically to the under 18 target in their quarterly return (received on the 28th March, with additional amendments made on the 4th April) NHS Highland state that '*Unfortunately it took longer than anticipated to establish the service, however, sufficient pumps have been ordered to ensure that there is capacity to meet the target over the next year*'.

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Our understanding of this was that with the purchase of these insulin pumps NHS Highland would be in a position to meet the commitment for paediatrics in a year's time (March 2014). However, NHS Highland's public comments following my evidence to the Committee on the 14th appears to suggest that the Board may still be working to a longer trajectory.

I would like to reiterate that I am taking action to ensure that NHS Highland meets the insulin pump commitment as quickly and as safely as possible. I am holding immediate talks with the Chair and Chief Executive of NHS Highland to discuss this matter. With the added support of our improvement team which I highlighted in my evidence to the Committee on the 14th May, we feel that the commitment is achievable in NHS Highland.

I trust that the Committee remains assured of our commitment to addressing this issue.

Michael Matheson