

PE1482/F

Petitioner Email of 25 March 2014

Dear Chris: See below for my response to Alex Neil's letter.

My reply

I am disappointed with Mr Neil's response. The Petition was submitted on behalf of the many people who justifiably fear isolation in a single room when in hospital or know that company hastens and improves their recovery: but Mr Neil's response does not address their concern. I had hoped that Mr Neil would respond to the following comments made at the meeting of the Petitions Committee (28th January):

Jackson Carlaw: *"I am perfectly happy with the suggestion that we write to the Scottish Government to ask it to ensure that the views of patients and the public—including the petitioner's views—are sought to inform the proposed review."*

Chic Brodie: *"I understand the concern, and I have heard some comments from the area about the lack of consultation, so I support the petition. When we first considered the petition, I raised the question of the cost implications and whether we were getting better value. It would be instructive, in writing to the Scottish Government on the clinical aspects of single rooms versus multi-bedded rooms, to ask in addition for evidence that single rooms are also cost effective."*

Would the Committee be willing to ask for a reply to these specific questions, and to clarify the nature of the proposed review?

During the past week I have asked two respected local medical colleagues who have made a detailed analysis of the evidence for and against the single room policy for their views. Their responses were as follows:

"John, The letter from Alex Neil fails to answer any of the points which were raised, apart from that of finance and even that is unsatisfactory. The majority of the health board were in favour of 100% single rooms, some very strongly so. This was quite apart from being tied to funding, unless a clinical case was made for multi-occupancy. For whatever reason, apparently no clinicians made such a case, perhaps lack of [courage]. I think the outcome may be 100% single rooms with all the added capital and service costs (including cleaning), with some lonely old people and frightened children. This could be pointed out in your reply to his letter."

David Hannay (ex NHS Board member and Professor of Medicine)

“John, There is clearly a complete unwillingness in the Scottish Government even to consider the possibility that they might have made a mistake here. They are obviously prepared to ride out the storm. We need an Exocet missile but we don't have one. I regret I am completely unable to think of another way to make them reconsider. The fact that Dumfries and Galloway rolled over and said we will do anything you ask provided you give us the money for a new hospital hasn't helped. The bottom line here is that our Health Board [were not brave] enough.”

Chris Isles (Professor of Medicine).

John Womersley, 25th March 2014