

Ms Rhona Brankin
Convener
Public Petitions Committee
TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

8 November 2010

Dear Ms Brankin,

St Margaret of Scotland Hospice (Petition PE1105)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the two letters received by the Petitions Committee, from Mr Colin Brown, Healthcare Policy and Strategy Directorate, Scottish Government dated 21 October 2010 and Mr Robert Calderwood, Chief Executive, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, dated 25 October 2010.

Scottish Government

In response to Mr Brown's letter, the draft report to which he refers, following the review of the adult hospice funding as described in HDL(2003)18, has caused substantial consternation for the Hospices. It was never the intention or remit of the HDL review group to replace the HDL. An emergency meeting of the Scottish Hospices Forum was called on 26 October. As a result of this meeting, a draft letter was drawn up by the Scottish Hospices Forum to the Scottish Government. Thereafter, the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care advised "We have received a number of comments regarding this proposal and through this email I am advising you that we will undertake some further work on this matter. We will undertake this work with full engagement of the Scottish Hospice Forum and NHS Boards. Further information will follow."

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

In response to Mr Calderwood's letter, I wish to ask why Mr Calderwood should provide an unspecific response to a specific question. His position is that dialogue is continuing on a regular basis which is not the case. He is presenting the usual quarterly meetings between Board representatives and the Hospice as regular dialogue but this has nothing to do with the issue of funding and the removal of beds from the Hospice. The Board Officers who attend these quarterly meetings are at a much lower level and are not in a position to discuss the funding or the removal of the beds. It is a totally separate issue and to continually mislead both the Parliament and the public is disgraceful.

On a recent Freedom of Information request which was handed into the Hospice by, it is assumed, a supporter, NHSGGC state "the Board does not maintain waiting lists for NHS continuing care beds, therefore in accordance with Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act, I must advise you that NHSGGC do not hold this information." In addition, in the same FOI request, the response states, "the number of patients admitted to NHS

continuing care facilities is also not recorded by the Board and therefore, again in accordance with Section 17, I must advise you that NHS GG&C do not hold this information”.

If waiting lists and admission details are not held by the Board, what information did they use to form the opinion that the beds at the Hospice are no longer required?

As the Hospice Chairman explained in his letter of 23 July 2010, the meetings which took place in March, April and June 2010 were at his initiative.

Mr Calderwood states in his response “the Hospices continues to decline to consider any other options suggested by the Board”. It is very strange Mr Calderwood refers to “options” when in a recent communication from Mr Andrew Robertson, Chairman, he stated “the care home model remains the only definitive proposition”. At the NHSGGC Annual Review on 1 November 2010, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing stated “both sides need to sit down and be prepared to find a solution if both sides work together with a willingness to find that solution, I have every confidence, even given the events of the past couple of years, it can be found.” How extraordinary that the Chairman and Chief Executive of NHSGGC continue to ignore the Cabinet Secretary’s instructions.

Again, as we stated in our letter of 29 July 2010, we have responded to NHSGGC regarding the Service Level Agreement. It is deplorable that once again the Chief Executive of NHSGGC is deliberately misleading the Parliament and the Public. To clarify, the Hospice responded to Ms Anne Harkness on 25 June 2010. The Health Board are still withholding £85,000 of the Hospice’s money until the SLA is signed, which is a form of blackmail.

It is of paramount importance the Petitions Committee hear evidence from the Hospice Chairman and Vice Chairman in order that they might hear first hand an account of the ‘progress’ which NHSGGC are maintaining has been made in relation to reaching a “solution.”

We are very grateful to the Committee for continuing with the Petition. The time has now come for the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Health Board to stop misleading the Petitions Committee, the public and above all, the Cabinet Secretary.

Yours sincerely

Jean Anne Mitchell