

PE1718/B

Scottish Government submission of 15 July 2019

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 June 2019, addressed to Carole Finnigan, Committee Liaison Officer, seeking the Scottish Government's view on the above petition. As the committee highlighted, the Scottish Government had not, until now considered the use of body cameras from a policy perspective, and we now welcome the opportunity to outline our position on this matter.

As previously highlighted by Clare Haughey, MSP, Minister for Mental Health, security arrangements in Carstairs, and other NHS Scotland settings, are the responsibility of individual Health Boards, in the context of ensuring staff and patient safety, and what is reasonable within each hospital, to keep staff and patients safe.

It is our view that safety risks would vary considerably in different NHS settings and for different job roles, such as security staff and ambulance crews. As such, we do not believe that body cameras would be necessary or appropriate for all frontline clinical staff, notably, for example in theatre settings where patients are under the care of a team and would be under anaesthetic.

The costs for the body cameras used for the feasibility study commissioned by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, were £6,540 for each camera and software and £1,109 for accessories. This would make the costs of such a proposal prohibitive for Health Boards and would not provide value for money. Another important consideration is that the feasibility study focussed on inpatient mental health settings, such as Broadmoor Hospital, where the body cameras were used to monitor changes in the levels of reported restraints. This would not be needed, to the same extent in other hospital settings.

The State Hospital (TSH) is the only high-security psychiatric facility in Scotland, serving a unique patient population and with unique service delivery and security needs. The Prevention and Management of Violence and Aggression (PMVA) Group at TSH in the hospital has for some time been mindful of the use of body worn cameras in other secure psychiatric inpatient settings. An options appraisal in relation to the possible use of body cameras is being developed, and this will be considered as part of the TSH's broader security refresh programmes, which includes installation of CCTV throughout the clinical areas of the hospital. Nevertheless, and as already outlined above, the study undertaken in NHS England provides scant evidence of the purported benefits of using body cameras in other frontline NHS settings.

The Scottish Government is clear that violence or aggression against staff or patients is unacceptable and we have policies and arrangements in place to provide and continuously improve a safe working environment. Further information on these is provided at **the Annex** to this letter. We also expect Health Boards to take appropriate action against anyone who assaults a staff member, or patient, including criminal proceedings where appropriate.

We welcome your offer to write to trade unions, the Scottish Ambulance Service, patient groups and the Scottish Information Commissioner for further views on the petitioner's call. In particular, and as noted by committee members and the Royal College of Nursing, the petitioner's call raises serious issues of confidentiality, data protection, privacy, civil liberties and a potential breakdown of trust between frontline staff and patients. We do have real concerns on these issues and further information and advice would be needed before any further consideration could be given to this proposal.

I hope this reply is helpful in outlining the Scottish Government's position.

Annexe

Policies for NHS Staff and Patient Safety

The Staff Governance Standard for NHSScotland commits all Boards to providing a continuously improving and safe working environment, promoting the health and wellbeing of staff, patients and the wider community. Any violence or aggression against staff and patients is unacceptable and we encourage Boards to take appropriate action against anyone who assaults a staff member, including criminal proceedings where appropriate.

In *Better Health, Better Care* we set out our proposal to create a mutual NHS in Scotland where staff, patients and carers fully understand their rights and responsibilities, and what they should expect from their NHS. A mutual NHS is an underpinning requirement of person-centred healthcare, so we will continue to pursue this as part of this Quality Strategy.

Under this Government, we have taken action to extend the Emergency Workers Act, which already provided legal protection to ambulance workers, doctors, nurses and midwives working in a hospital or responding to an emergency, to cover GPs, other doctors, nurses and midwives, whenever they are working in the community.

It is worth noting that figures on violence and aggression towards NHSScotland staff are not collected nationally. This is a matter for Health Boards.

The Scottish Government recognise that when adverse events occur during the provision of treatment or care, openness and transparency is fundamental in promoting a culture of learning and continuous improvement in health and social care settings.

The duty of candour procedure provisions reflect the Scottish Government's commitment to place people at the heart of health and social care services in Scotland. When harm occurs the focus must be on personal contact with those affected; support and a process of review and action that is meaningful and informed by the principles of learning and continuous improvement

The safety of patients and staff is paramount in the design and operation of services and appropriate levels of staff are vital to ensure the provision of person centred, safe and effective care. We introduced safe health and care staffing legislation – the first multi-disciplinary workforce and workload planning legislation in the UK. This legislation has now been passed and seeks to ensure safe, high quality services, creating better outcomes for patients together with improving wellbeing of staff.