

PE1805/B

Petitioner submission of 17 September 2020

Firstly, I would like to make it clear that I am asking the committee to consider that towns with a population of 50 thousand should have a General Hospital with A & E facilities and out of hours facilities in their own town. Smaller towns should have, at the very least, access to x-ray facilities and out of hours facilities.

As a nurse, a member of the SNP and more importantly a person concerned with the latest and by no means the last pandemic I am surprised by the government's response to my petition.

Government strategy may well have been to reduce the need for secondary care through measures to prevent ill health and support early intervention, however such changes take generations to implement if they are at all successful and in the meantime secondary care is imperative especially in light of the recent pandemic. And to leave a town such as the size of Cumbernauld without these facilities is bordering on neglect. With no transport links servicing the old Monklands hospital nor the new proposal sites and with no out of hours services in the town I don't think neglect is too strong a word.

For those without the luxuries of a car, finding your way to a hospital out-with your own town in the middle of the night or even after 6pm as is the case in Cumbernauld is more than difficult when there is no transport in place to take you there. And I think it's fair to say that the majority of people who don't have a car are those on a lower income and can ill afford a taxi to and from another town at short notice when someone becomes sick. There may well be telephone consultations but I reject the NHS' response that there are home visits to prevent the need to travel. This is not the experience of anyone I have spoken to in relation to this issue. People in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth are expected to find their own way to another town. Places that are nowhere near them nor are they familiar with.

I am not at all surprised by NHS Lanarkshire's response to the government's request for information on how well Cumbernauld is served when it comes to healthcare facilities, especially when I recall that NHS Lanarkshire dismissed Cumbernauld as a viable option for the new hospital.

Not only where NHS Lanarkshire looking at sites out with the North Lanarkshire area such as East Kilbride, they looked at 5 sites in Motherwell and 4 in Gartcosh - which I think speaks volumes as to where they (both NHS Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire council) wanted to place the new hospital, well before they had carried out any site inspections, but to reject Cumbernauld (which incidentally had the largest acreage of all the proposed sites) because it reportedly 'had a major impact on other hospitals' is a poor excuse!

Cumbernauld to Forth Valley Larbert - 10 miles.

Gartcosh to Glasgow Royal Infirmary- 8 miles

Residents of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth are actively discouraged from attending Forth Valley Hospital in Larbert and most residents don't know of its existence.

When you consider that the majority of patients attending Monklands are from Cumbernauld it beggars belief that the considerations for the new site of Monklands is anywhere but Cumbernauld. Why would NHS Lanarkshire turn down the offer of a free piece of land on which to build a hospital in their largest town? Most councils would jump at such an offer. Most councils would showcase their largest town with the most populous tax paying citizens.

Cumbernauld has doctors surgeries but that's all it has. I find it bizarre that as the town grew larger (yes, larger!) NHS Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire council decided in their wisdom that it was time to get rid of the existing healthcare facilities in Cumbernauld and so the out of hours and x ray facilities were scrapped.

I find it irrelevant that North Lanarkshire has 3 hospitals when you consider both the location of those hospitals and the population of Cumbernauld. A town the size of Cumbernauld needs and should have its own hospital for its own residents. It's that simple.

And while NHS Lanarkshire might well be in the "closing stages" of deciding on the new location for the hospital, we all know that it has already decided to choose Gartcosh.

I would ask that the committee considers that towns like that of Cumbernauld be supplied with hospitals as standard.