

PE1845/G

Councillor Willie Scobie submission of 20 January 2021

Cancer Pathway

This has been a bone of contention for many years dating back decades where patients in Stranraer have been referred to Edinburgh for cancer treatment because of historical connections between Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary (DGRI) and Edinburgh's Royal Infirmary. This causes great logistical problems for the people in Stranraer with public transport journey time being well over 4 hours if, indeed, it was possible to get to Edinburgh and back in the same day for the appointment time. It is not uncommon for cancer patients to receive an appointment for early morning which is physically impossible to make on that day and has meant the patients have had to travel the day before, with overnight accommodation having to be arranged at their expense. The same can be said for spouse and family wanting to visit their loved ones.

There was a local Petition in 2016 that was signed by thousands of people. This Petition called for Dumfries & Galloway Health Board to consider a shorter pathway to Glasgow for people living in Wigtownshire. Promises were made to consider it but, nearly 5 years on, still no Glasgow pathway.

Maternity Service

Stranraer had the Clenoch Maternity Hospital up to 1975/76 when a new maternity ward was opened at Dalrymple Hospital. Since then the maternity unit has been reduced and reduced until today when it is down to a 2-bed maternity unit in the Galloway Community Hospital. For nearly 2 years these beds have not been used but with no indication as to why or whether the Maternity Unit has been closed!

Since being elected as a Councillor in 1988 I can truthfully say I have continually received complaints from pregnant women of having to travel to Dumfries. These have been generally about arriving at the Galloway Community Hospital for an appointment and told they had to make their own way to Dumfries for whatever reason at their expense. Many had no form of transport and often had to rely on family or friends to transport them to Dumfries. More often than not they would arrive at Dumfries and, after a 3-minute examination, would be told everything was ok and sent home to Stranraer.

The most recent complaint was in December 2020 with a pregnant mother suffering from hyperemesis (severe vomiting in pregnancy). This is her fourth time in giving birth and, with her permission, I quote

“It's extremely annoying having to continually go to Dumfries in order to get anti-sickness medication and a drip when there is a hospital in Stranraer. It affects my husband as he is unable to work for the full day by the time he takes me down and also I have a little girl in school and it's hard to organise your day around that too. However, this is my second visit to Dumfries in this pregnancy alone and the symptoms are exactly the same. Even if the initial

time I was sent to Dumfries, a week later when I arrive with the same symptoms having been seen, I know that I am purely being sent to Dumfries to be put on a drip and given anti-sickness medication. There are bloods taken at the time too. Surely, a copy of these bloods could be sent to Dumfries easier than me travelling myself and a Doctor can look at them if they really felt it necessary? But it's always a midwife who looks after me throughout my stay in the unit (at DGRI)."

This is one example but what it does is highlight the difficulties encountered with being 75 miles away from the only other Maternity Hospital used in the region. This is appalling that Stranraer, as the second largest town in Dumfries and Galloway with a population of over 11 thousand, should not have a functional Maternity Unit with pregnant women having to travel to Dumfries to give birth.

Out-patient Consultant Appointments

This is another of the services where people have to travel inordinate number of times, all too often at their own expense, to attend out-patient appointments arranged to see consultants at DGRI. The out-patient appointment figures are astounding, as admitted by the Chief Executive of NHS Dumfries & Galloway as far back as 2013 when the issue was first raised with him. Patients have to travel 150 mile and more round trip from Stranraer to Dumfries, frequently for a less than 5 minute appointment.