

PE1739/A

Scottish Government submission of 18 October 2019

I refer to your letter of 20 September 2019 to Carole Finnigan - Committee Liaison Officer - seeking the Scottish Government's view on the action called for in the petition. The Committee is also seeking clarification on points raised at the meeting on 19 September 2019, as to what the current situation is and whether the guidance for weight loss surgery has been recently updated.

Bariatric Surgery in Scotland

In the petition background information, the petitioner states that in Scotland "*patients MUST have Type 2 Diabetes to qualify for Bariatric Surgery*".

The petitioner also states that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends bariatric surgery when the patient has other comorbidities which would benefit from significant weight loss such as diabetes, sleep apnoea etc.

In Scotland, the [National Planning Forum's obesity treatment best practice guide](#) sets out advice for NHS Boards on the criteria for weight loss surgery.

The guidance advises that the following groups may be considered for bariatric surgery:

- Individuals who are aged between 18-44 with a BMI 35-40 kg/m² and recent (less than 5 years) onset of Type 2 diabetes;
- individuals who are aged between 18-44 with a BMI of 40-50 kg/m² and onset of Type 2 diabetes of < 5 years;
- Other groups of patients who, local clinicians, feel may benefit from bariatric surgery.

The Committee will note that the best practice guide does include individuals that do not have diabetes, but may benefit from this procedure.

Bariatric surgery is major surgery that involves risks and sometimes complications. The risks and complications vary and depend on age, excess weight and existing health conditions.

It is clear in clinical guidance that bariatric surgery should be offered only when other weight management interventions have been explored.

Clinicians, in consultation with the patient, discuss and agree treatment options based on clinical guidance and individual circumstances and needs. This includes the patient being fit to have the surgery under general anaesthetic.

The Committee indicates that the petitioner "*has contacted the clerks to say that he has been advised by national health service officials that the policy that the petition is seeking to change has been amended*". I believe that the petitioner refers to [Greater Glasgow and Clyde local criteria and pathway for bariatric surgery](#): The criteria was updated in September 2019.

Weight management

Bariatric surgery is a treatment option available in all NHS Board areas. However, there is no doubt that bariatric surgery only has a limited impact on the prevalence of obesity and the increased, unsustainable demand this places on the NHS and other public services. The way forward is a focus on prevention and early intervention, combined with a holistic approach to weight management services, including some provision of surgery for those groups most likely to achieve significant benefit.

The [Scottish Government's Healthier Future: Scotland's Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan](#), published in July 2018, set out a vision for everyone in Scotland to eat well and have a healthy weight, and ambitions to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity and significantly reduce diet-related health inequalities. The plan, in addition to the broad-ranging preventative actions, also recognises the need for targeted and tailored support for adults in Scotland to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. In July 2019, NHS Health Scotland published [minimum standards](#) to improve the quality, consistency and equity of access to weight management services delivered by NHS Boards and their partners. The standards will also support the implementation of the [Type 2 Diabetes Prevention, Early Detection and Intervention Framework](#), with an additional investment of £42 million over 5 years, to improve access to weight management support for people with, or at risk of, type 2 diabetes.

Sitting alongside the Diet and Healthy Weight Delivery Plan the Scottish Government published [A More Active Scotland: Scotland's Physical Activity Delivery Plan in July 2018](#). This policy recognises the importance of both diet and activity in promoting and maintaining healthy weight. The [Health and Social Care Delivery Plan \(2016\)](#) also calls on NHS Boards to integrate the [National Physical Activity Pathway](#) into all appropriate clinical settings, including weight management services. Furthermore, reducing overweight and obesity prevalence contributes to the new Scottish National Performance Framework (NPF) outcome that we are healthy and active.