

Scottish Health Council – briefing for Health and Sport Committee January 2017

The Scottish Health Council was established in April 2005 to promote improvements in the quality and extent of public involvement in the NHS in Scotland. It supports and monitors work carried out by NHS Boards to involve patients and the public in the planning and development of health services and in decisions that affect the running of those services.

The Scottish Health Council is a Committee of Healthcare Improvement Scotland. The Chair of the Scottish Health Council is appointed by Ministers. In 2016-17 the Scottish Health Council budget is approximately £2.3m. It has a network of 14 local offices across Scotland (one in each health board area) and a National Office in Glasgow.

The local offices provide community engagement and improvement support. Their role includes:

- enabling local communities to be involved in the planning and development of services and supporting them to influence how these services are delivered
- supporting NHS boards to continually improve the way they engage with their local communities
- working with ‘seldom heard’ groups to ensure they have the opportunity, skills, and capacity to influence health services, and
- supporting local engagement mechanisms in primary care.

Approaches might include engagement sessions, surveys, training and supporting the development of participation structures. Our local offices also gather public views on particular topics for the Scottish Government, NHS boards or other parts of the NHS to help inform policy.

We also promote good practice, for example by developing guidance and resources, and by sharing real-life examples of how local services have been improved by involving patients, carers, service users and communities.

We assess how well NHS boards are involving people by using the Participation Standard. Scotland’s *Participation Standard*, developed by the Scottish Health Council, is helping NHS boards improve how they involve people and use complaints to improve services.

The Scottish Health Council provides support to NHS Boards in their development of volunteering.

Service change: supporting public engagement in decision-making

The National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2004 placed a legal duty on NHS boards to consult with the public. The 2010 Scottish Government guidance, 'Informing, Engaging and Consulting People in Developing Health and Community Care Services' (CEL4) 2010 established a clear process and expectations for NHS Boards as well as describing the role of the Scottish Health Council.

The Scottish Health Council's current role is to support NHS Boards in engaging and consulting with patients, service users and the public and to quality assure those service change engagement exercises which are deemed 'major' by the Scottish Government. Tailored advice and support is provided across Scotland through a dedicated team and formal reports are provided advising whether Boards' engagement activities have complied with Scottish Government guidance.

We provide support and advice for the many more instances where proposals are not deemed major; this can be between 30 and 45 service change processes at any one time.

We also highlight areas of good practice for other NHS boards to use, which may include patient and public representation in the planning and early engagement phase, direct feedback from those people with experience of the service and the use of social media to share information.

Our Voice

We are leading on the development of a number of aspects of Our Voice, which supports people to engage with health and social care providers to continuously improve and transform services. The work is being developed with the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (The ALLIANCE), the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Government.

Our Voice is based on a vision that people who use health and care services, carers and the public will be able to engage purposefully at every level in health and social care, to continuously improve and transform services. There are three essential levels:

1. The user / carer level - their personal interaction with services
2. The local community level
3. The national policy level

A Citizens' Panel has been established to help improve health and social care services in Scotland. Consisting of 1,301 members from across all 32 local authority areas, the Panel will help to give a picture of what people across Scotland think and feel about a wide range of health and social care issues. This is the first time a Citizens' Panel of this nature has been established in Scotland.

Scottish Health Council Review

A review of the Scottish Health Council is currently taking place. The review is central to the future direction of public engagement in the development of health and social care services.