

PE1845/Z: NHS Borders submission of 1 December 2022

NHS Borders response to Scottish Parliament's Consideration of Petitions

I refer to the petitions referred to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee in September 2022 highlighting the challenges faced by rural and remote communities and the possible need for support to ensure access to rural healthcare. NHS Borders is pleased to share our general views on the petitions and issues associated with access to healthcare in rural areas.

PE1845: Agency to advocate for the healthcare needs of rural Scotland

The position of NHS Borders on this petition is that a dedicated agency may not be the answer to this issue and could add another layer of bureaucracy to healthcare in Scotland. What would be more important would be to ensure remote and rural issues are adequately built into mainstream discussions and existing frameworks rather than dealt with separately through a dedicated agency. A more serious discussion needs to be had regarding the provision of healthcare within remote and rural settings in order to provide safe healthcare for communities that are dispersed over a wide geographical area. It will be helpful to have clear links into the Academic & professional communities to support policy development for remote & rural healthcare.

PE1890: Find solutions to recruitment and training challenges for rural healthcare in Scotland

The Integrated Health & Social Care Partnership Workforce Plan and NHS Borders Workforce Plan highlight challenges for NHS Borders and the wider Health and Social Care workforce around access to training, difficult to recruit to roles and retention of experienced staff within the Borders rural setting. Access to local training and development opportunities with clear qualification pathways would enhance our ability to train, recruit and retain staff within the Borders. Opportunities for generic training across Health and Social Care boundaries and a training academy approach are being explored, alongside working with the housing sector to identify the potential to develop housing for key workers and local letting initiatives. Enhancing pay and conditions of employment would undoubtedly make careers more attractive. Although locally we have little influence around pay due to national terms and conditions, we do see merit in exploring staff benefit schemes specific to the Borders, flexible working patterns and ensuring staff wellbeing remains a priority.

PE1924: Complete an emergency in-depth review of Women's Health services in Caithness & Sutherland

NHS Borders do not feel positioned to express views on the Women's Health services available within Caithness and Sutherland. Within our own locality, NHS Borders is

working in partnership with primary services and public health to establish a women's health plan to meet the needs of our women within the Borders. Women have access to Gynaecological care and out-patient facilities both peripherally and within the hospital setting. A gynaecological inpatient service is provided within our Surgical ward, which includes ectopic pregnancies. Early pregnancy concerns/losses are provided within our Maternity service. Sexual health service is provided within community setting. There is a Gynaecological Consultant lead to ensure there is safe access to Gynaecological services across NHS Borders.

We are, of course, happy to discuss any element of this response further with you and your team.

With best wishes

Ralph Roberts
Chief Executive