

**PE1805/A**

Scottish Government submission of 16 September 2020

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to this petition for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the number of hospitals in Scotland, particularly in towns with no hospital or out of hours provision, or transport links to access such services.

The location and nature of healthcare facilities is a matter for each territorial Health Board to consider for its own area, taking into account the needs of its population, the geography of its area and NHS Scotland's clinical strategy. The petitioner calls for towns with a certain number of residents to automatically qualify for a hospital. The Scottish Government does not believe that such a rule should be substituted for a system based on an assessment of need.

The Scottish Government's overall strategy for NHS Scotland is to reduce the need for secondary care (hospital based treatment) through measures to prevent ill-health and support early intervention. This approach requires a shift in focus to care carried out closer to home by primary and community care services. An increase in the number of hospitals in Scotland would not support this strategy.

The petitioner raises specific concerns regarding healthcare facilities and the provision of Out of Hours (OOHs) services in the town of Cumbernauld. The Scottish Government has asked NHS Lanarkshire for its views on the healthcare facilities in Cumbernauld. The Health Board states that the town is one of the best served in terms of the number of local healthcare facilities in place with significant investment being made in Central Health Centre, the new Kildrum Health Centre, and the new Kilsyth Health Centre in the locality and a range of other capital investments in recent years.

The Health Board began a review of its OOHs services in 2015 in line with Sir Lewis Ritchie's Review – *Pulling together: transforming urgent care for the people of Scotland*. Following that review and a period of significant consultation, NHS Lanarkshire made the decision to move to a two centre model based in Airdrie and Hamilton in order to provide a clinically safe service. It does continue to offer telephone consultations and home visits to reduce the need to travel during the out of hours period, unless it is deemed clinically urgent.

Lanarkshire is served by three district general hospitals which each have their own Accident and Emergency Department. NHS Lanarkshire are in the closing stages of preparing a report on the selection of a site for the new University Hospital Monklands and each of the three sites being considered (in alphabetical order - Gartcosh, Glenmavis and Wester Moffat) are closer by travel time to Cumbernauld than the current hospital.

I hope that the Committee finds this response helpful in considering the petition.