

Vaughan Gething AM
Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport
Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

24 August 2016

Dear Cabinet Secretary

NHS Chaplaincy – Consideration of the following Petitions:

P-04-457 The Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign
P-04-474 Support for NHS Chaplaincy Services

The above petitions about the provision of Chaplaincy services in the National Health Service were submitted in the previous Assembly and considered by the 4th Assembly's Petitions Committee.

Background

The full text of both petitions is attached as an annexe to this letter. However, the essential points made by the respective petitions are:

- that Chaplaincy services should be funded through charitable fundraising rather than public expenditure (*Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign*);
- that Chaplaincy services should continue to be funded in, essentially, the same way as now (*Support for NHS Chaplaincy Services*).

The Charitable Chaplaincy campaign's petition was first considered by the then Committee in February 2013. The petition in support of NHS Chaplaincy services was submitted as a response to this and was first considered by the Committee in April 2013 when the Committee agreed that, as both petitions addressed the same issue (albeit from very different perspectives), it would group them together for consideration.

The Committee subsequently took oral evidence from both sets of petitioners. Following this my predecessor as Chair of the Committee wrote to Mark Drakeford, the then Minister for Health and Social Services, to highlight the Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign's concerns about definitions of spiritual and



religious care and to ask whether the Welsh Government required LHBs to provide chaplaincy services.

The Committee also wrote to Local Health Boards asking whether any data in relation to use of chaplaincy services is recorded and how funding is allocated for these services across the range of sites that an LHB is responsible for and how they ensured equity of service provision.

The Committee received a range of responses from LHBs, which were published on our website and can be found at the following hyperlink.

<http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/ieIssueDetails.aspx?Id=6288&Opt=3>

The Minister replied on 26 July 2013 (your ref MD/01729/13) and his reply was considered at the same meeting. The Committee also received a detailed response from the Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign petitioners and this can also be found at the above link.

In the light of the responses received, the Committee agreed to write again to Mark Drakeford to highlight some of the issues that arose during consideration of the petitions.

Unfortunately, pressure of other competing work led to this action being delayed and at the end of the previous Assembly the Committee had not written to the then Minister.

However, the advent of the new Assembly and Committee, together with your appointment as the new Cabinet Secretary for Health, Well-being and Sport, provides an opportunity to consider again some of the key points raised by the competing petitions.

I would, therefore, be grateful if you, as the new Minister responsible, could consider the points raised by both petitions and whether, in the time since your predecessor wrote to mine, there are any material changes that might lead you to reassess the arrangements for chaplaincy services in the NHS in Wales.

In doing so I would be grateful if you could address the following questions in particular.

Issues for Consideration

The Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign petitioners claim that between 2007-08, when they first started collecting information, and 2013-14 over £9million has been spent on religious care in hospitals in Wales. If these figures are accurate, this suggests of annual expenditure of around £1.3 million across the NHS in Wales. Are you happy that this level of funding is sustainable given current budget restraints?

There seems to be some confusion as to whether chaplaincy services are required to be provided by the NHS in Wales. Is there any requirement on Local Health

Boards to fund these services and if so what arrangements are in place to monitor their effectiveness and ensure equitable provision across Wales?

Conversely, do you believe there is a case for greater spending on these services or that consideration should be given to extending them to other care settings, such as primary and social care settings, as the Support for Chaplaincy Services petitioners have suggested?

The Charitable Chaplaincy petitioners do not seek the end of chaplaincy services in the NHS but instead advocate these services being funded through charitable giving. Is that an option you would be prepared to consider and do you believe that doing so would put chaplaincy services at risk?

The petitioners in support of Chaplaincy Services have suggested that if this route was followed it would lead to inequalities in service provision, with areas with an abundance of faith communities faring differently to areas that do not. Do you agree with this position and would it in any event necessarily be a bad thing?

Conclusion

Given the amount of time that has passed since the previous Petitions Committee considered these petitions it is only right that the current Committee should revisit some of the issues of substance that they raise before deciding how to proceed. Your response will be of considerable assistance in helping the Committee consider its next steps.

I would be grateful if you could send your response by e-mail to the Committee Clerk at SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike', is written over a diagonal line that extends from the bottom left towards the top right.

Mike Hedges AM
Committee Chair

Annexe – Text of Petitions

P-04-457 The Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign

We call upon the National Assembly to urge the Welsh Government to cease the use of National Health Service budget for religious care and to work with the leaders of organised religion to establish a charitable trust to fund religious care in the hospitals of Wales.

Supporting Information:

The charitable chaplaincy campaign comprises an informal network of citizen who are concerned that every million pounds of public money allocated to the NHS in Wales should be used to promote public health and to treat those who need medical attention.

Our campaign has no funds and needs none. It is sponsored by no other organisation within or without Wales. Modern internet based services allow us to communicate with each other and with our democratically elected representatives.

All our supporters have seen and concur with two documents which are provided in support of this petition, Principles which sets out our motivation and Proposal which states our case with supporting evidence and rational argument.

We provide a third document Employment which provides evidence of how the monies drawn from the NHS Budget for hospital chaplaincy services are currently spent.

Petition raised by: The Charitable Chaplaincy Campaign

P-04-474 Support for NHS chaplaincy services

We recognise the positive contribution of hospital chaplaincy services in delivering spiritual care within the Welsh NHS and recognise the tremendous work that the chaplaincy service in the NHS is providing.

This service plays an important role in the spiritual wellbeing of both patients and NHS staff, not only for those with a religious affiliation but also for others with no association with a religious group. We call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to continue with its commitment to funding hospital chaplaincy services and to extend the benefits of chaplaincy services to other care settings, including primary and social care settings.

Petition raised by: Jim Stewart