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Scottish Ambulance Service

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From: William Brackenridge, Chairman

WB/SDR/LAR

23 January 2008

Dan Isaac
Patient and Quality Division
The Scottish Government
Healthcare Policy and Strategy Directorate
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Dan

Independent Scrutiny

Thank you for your letter of October 2007 inviting responses to the consultation document on the Scottish Government's intention of introducing independent, external scrutiny of proposals for major changes in the NHS services.

We have considered the consultation document very carefully and have worked with our colleagues in the Scottish Health Council to think through how the guidance might work for us and we certainly welcome the principle of independent scrutiny. We have considered in particular the draft criteria used to determine whether or not a change could be considered "major". We understand that more work is currently underway to determine the definition of "major" service change, and we look forward to seeing that clarity emerge in due course.

In the meantime we have some concerns regarding the applicability of the draft criteria to a national service such as ours. Taken in the context of the Scottish Ambulance Service as a Special Health Board there are clearly implications for the Board with the check list as it stands. The majority of our service changes could be considered as "major" if considered against the list due to the fact that our services are potentially used by all of the population and will probably involve unscheduled care due to the very nature of the organisation.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss with you an approach which allows us to satisfy the very necessary need for full independent scrutiny as appropriate, but which is also best suited to the needs of the Service. Some of the issues we would want to discuss are



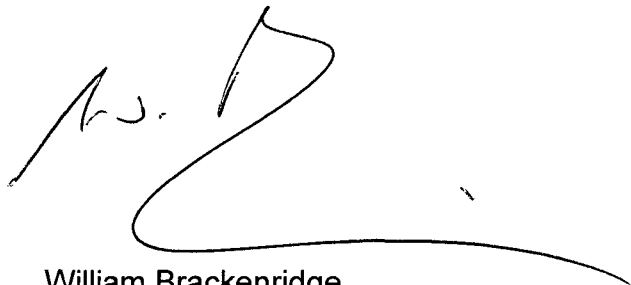
A Special Health Board of the NHS in Scotland



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- The objectives, roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny panels need to be very clear as do the roles of the Scottish Government and the Health boards
- Independent Scrutiny Panels will not have the responsibility of delivering services and so their judgement and opinions may differ from our own, so a full understanding of what is required will be necessary before we start
- One of the issues that we sometimes face is that some Territorial Board Service Redesign has taken part without sufficient weight being given to the Scottish Ambulance Service and so independent scrutiny would also benefit us as well as the public. We look forward to a discussion about how independent scrutiny panels might help us to better integrate our plans with those of others and vice versa.
- We would also welcome the opportunity to talk through the role of the Non Executive Directors, the kinds of issues that would be subject to independent scrutiny, how we would manage the potential complexity and workload of our involvement in both our own service changes and its consequential independent scrutiny and the requirement for us to become involved in the service change of other Territorial and Special Boards

I would be very grateful if you could contact Shirley Rogers, my Director of Human Resources and Clinical Development, who has responsibility for these matters and arrange to meet to discuss the matter more fully. I think this approach may be most helpful both to ourselves and hopefully to you as you shape up future policy in this area. I have no doubt that colleagues in other Special Health Boards may also benefit from this approach, and to that end we will contribute to that process in any way we can. Shirley can be contacted on 0131 446 7017 or srogers@scotamb.co.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Brackenridge', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

William Brackenridge
CHAIRMAN