

**Severin G (Gillie)**

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**From:** madams@north-ayrshire.gov.uk  
**Sent:** 28 January 2008 15:37  
**To:** NHS Independent Scrutiny  
**Subject:** Independent Scrutiny ['Watchdog': checked] [Watchdog checked]

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I attach North Ayrshire Council's comments on the recent consultation on independent scrutiny of major changes in NHS services. I apologise for the delay in issuing these to you and hope that they are of assistance.

Kind regards

Marjorie Adams  
Policy Officer

Chief Executive's Services  
North Ayrshire Council, Cunninghame House, Irvine KA12 8EE  
Tel: 01294 324128  
Fax: 01294 324144

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# **Independent Scrutiny of NHS Boards proposals for Major Changes in local NHS Services**

## **Response by North Ayrshire Council**

**Question 1: Do you agree that an expert panel is the most effective way to provide independent scrutiny? If not, what would be your preferred choice?**

Yes. This would be preferred to the other options of a decision conference or scrutiny body. As the discussion paper highlights, local authorities work closely with local Health Boards, particularly through community planning structures. It could create difficulties for the working relationship between the two bodies if the Council were to be involved in providing independent scrutiny of Board proposals.

It would be vital, however, to ensure the complete independence of the expert panel's members from any party political bias, in order to ensure its integrity.

**Question 2: Do you agree that the role of the panel should be to assess the safety, sustainability, evidence-base and value for money of NHS Boards' proposals for major changes to local NHS services?**

Yes. Patient safety must be a key priority for NHS services and all of the above factors have a bearing on proposals for major change.

**Question 3: Do you agree that the chair should be a lay person appointed by Scottish Ministers?**

Yes, this would help to strengthen the public accountability and confidence in the Panel.

**Question 4: Do you agree that the panel should have a lay majority among its members?**

Yes. This could assist in ensuring greater public confidence but it would be important that they have the necessary skills and expertise to be able consider and understand the often highly complex information used to argue for service change.

**Question 5: Do you agree that the panel should assess the evidence and options during the process of public engagement prior to consultation, and provide a commentary on these that would be available to the Board and Ministers in reaching decisions?**

Yes. Although there is an argument that the Board should take forward public engagement on its proposals prior to the Panel becoming involved, it would

make sense to allow the Panel's involvement at this earlier stage. This would provide an early indication of any significant issues arising from the external scrutiny of the Board's proposals and could provide constructive feedback prior to more extensive consultation.

**Question 6: Do you have any other comments on how independent scrutiny should be carried out, or on the guidance on "Informing, engaging and consulting the public in developing health and community care services" at Annex 3?**

The Council has had recent experience of independent scrutiny and was disappointed that the Independent Panel declined its request to hold a public meeting in the North Ayrshire area to hear the views of North Ayrshire's communities. The Council subsequently submitted its views in writing for the Panel's consideration. NHS Ayrshire & Arran has kept the Council advised of developments with its review.

There should be consideration given to include in the guidance advice on how the independent scrutiny panel would engage with local authorities to obtain or invite their views. There should also be consideration of how it consults across geographic areas such as Ayrshire where two local authority (South and East) areas have a more direct interest in the location of hospital services in their areas. North Ayrshire Council, however, has concerns about the broader impact of the changes on its area and that the views of all the population served by the two hospitals in East and South Ayrshire should be heard.

**Question 7: Do you have any other comments on either the consultation process or your preferred choice.**

No