

Deputy First Minister & Cabinet Secretary for  
Health and Wellbeing  
Nicola Sturgeon MSP

T: 0845 774 1741  
E: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Andrew Robertson OBE  
Chairman  
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde  
Dalian House  
PO Box 15329  
350 St. Vincent Street  
GLASGOW  
G3 8YZ

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Dear Andrew

I am writing in response to your submission of 20 March 2009 setting out your proposals to develop and improve services at the Vale of Leven Hospital in Alexandria.

I have carefully considered your *Vision for the Vale* proposals which were approved by the Board of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde on 24 February 2009. In doing so, I had to be convinced that the plans are in the best interests of patients; that key local services would be safeguarded and improved; that the Board had credible and viable plans for the hospital's future; and that the proposals are consistent with national policy, frameworks and guidance.

Having carefully considered all the available information, I am content to approve the Board's proposals (as outlined on pages 1-2 of your 20 March covering letter) that: whilst independent experts have concluded that anaesthetics cover is not sustainable at the hospital, a new consultant-led unscheduled care model will ensure that at least 70 per cent of unscheduled care services will be retained; that alternative arrangements be made for the provision of local rehabilitation services; that elderly acute mental health services be retained at the Vale and integrated with continuing care services from Dumbarton Joint Hospital; and that some 18,350 planned care attendances be repatriated to the Vale alongside the future development of a palliative care service. In all these cases, I am content that the proposed changes are consistent with national policy and will provide a modern, fit-for-purpose service for the benefit of patients.

With respect to the Board's proposal to close the Vale's Christie Ward and transfer adult inpatient mental health services to Gartnavel Hospital, I have noted the Board's prediction that – given the additional provision and uptake of community-based services locally – demand for bed numbers at the Christie Ward will reduce to 12 beds or less in the next year or so. I agree that this position would mean it was not possible for the Board to maintain a high quality, efficient service. However, you will appreciate that I want to be sure of the position before formally agreeing the Board's proposal.

As such, I intend to reconsider your proposal in 12-18 months' time – or sooner, should the demand for beds fall more rapidly - informed by a further report on the actual levels and trends in demand that are experienced. My officials will work with the Board to agree the key questions which this report will need to address. I expect the monitoring group, mentioned below, to play a full part in this process.

I recognise that the Board's approach to this review of services, and the associated consultation process, took full account of the previous Clyde Independent Scrutiny Panel commentary, and has been endorsed by the Scottish Health Council. In making my decision on the *Vision for the Vale* proposals, I also wish to ensure that the Health Council's two specific recommendations are implemented: that the Board carries out a promotion exercise of the current and new services to be provided from the Vale, ensuring that local people know what services are and will be available, and how these can be accessed; and that a monitoring group be established, including representation from the local public, to oversee the development and delivery of the service change plans. This group should be kept apprised of the development of the Vale capital investment plan; should include representatives of local mental health users and carers; and should be involved in the preparation of the additional report on demand for adult inpatient mental health services. The Scottish Government will provide a remit and working criteria for the group, and will work with the Board to ensure that the membership of the group reflects the interests of local stakeholders as far as possible.

I am grateful to the Board for the considerable efforts that have been made to put an end to the uncertainty which has surrounded the Vale of Leven Hospital for a decade; and to assure local people that the hospital site has a significant part to play in the delivery of local healthcare services in the long-term future. I know the Board will appreciate the need to ensure that local people continue to be kept fully informed and involved in the future development and delivery of these services.



**NICOLA STURGEON**