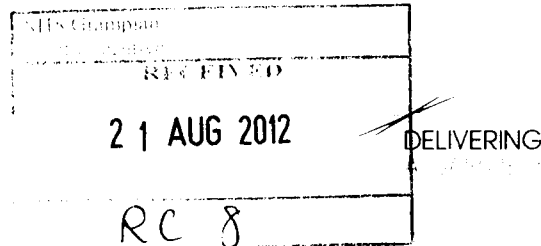


Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary  
for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy  
Nicola Sturgeon MSP

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



Richard Carey  
Chief Executive  
NHS Grampian  
Summerfield House  
2 Eday Road  
Aberdeen  
AB15 6RE



Your ref: RC/PB  
Our ref: POL/14308  
18 August 2012

## **NHS GRAMPIAN: PROPOSED CHANGES TO MATERNITY SERVICES**

I am writing in response to your letter and supporting documents of 27 June in which you set out the case for making changes to local maternity services in Grampian. Your submission follows NHS Grampian's strategic review of service provision; the options appraisal exercise and public consultation. The maternity proposals were approved by the Board of NHS Grampian on 12 June 2012 and submitted to the Scottish Government for approval following designation as a major service change.

I am pleased to note the time and effort NHS Grampian has invested in conducting a robust and inclusive option appraisal and consultation exercise and am grateful to the lay representatives and Board staff who have clearly devoted considerable time and effort to this process. I note the Scottish Health Council's (SHC) view that the Board has followed the Scottish Government's guidance (CEL4(2010)) on involving local people in service change and the SHC's intention to involve NHS Grampian in sharing good practice around engagement and co-operation.

In considering any proposals for major service change, I have to be convinced that the plans are in the best interests of patients, and are consistent with national policy, frameworks and guidance - not least the Scottish Government's Quality Strategy and, in this case the Refreshed Framework for Maternity Care. It is clear that the Board has considered the merits of a wide range of potential service models; undertaken an extensive and interactive period of consultation; listened and responded to the views of a wide range of stakeholders. As a result, you have highlighted that the final proposals for maternity services in NHS Grampian have a high level of public, partnership and professional support and acceptance.

I have given careful consideration to NHS Grampian's maternity proposals in terms of quality, safety and access to services and have reached the view that the proposals are consistent with national policy and will provide a modern, fit-for-purpose service for the benefit of patients. I am therefore giving my approval to NHS Grampian to move forward with the implementation of these proposals.

Although there was widespread support for the aims and many of the specific aspects of the proposals some consultees raised concerns regarding the removal of birth units from local communities; proposed locations for the Community Maternity Units (CMUs); transport and access issues; and the timeline for implementation. You have provided reassurances on these points in your supporting documentation. On the question of implementation you clarified that the birth units at Aboyne and Fraserburgh would not close until the CMUs at Aberdeen and Peterhead and the Integrated Community Teams are in place. You have indicated that the development of a CMU for Inverurie is likely to take place in 2014/15 and clearly your longer term aim to redevelop Aberdeen Maternity Hospital will be contingent on the future availability of capital funding.

Moving forward it will be crucial that the changes to service provision and the relevant timelines are effectively communicated to local stakeholders and that there remains a forum for raising ongoing queries and concerns.

My officials have informed me that NHS Grampian is in the process of developing a Maternity Liaison Committee that will draw on membership from local maternity groups and users from across the Health Board who will link directly with an implementation group to ensure that any ongoing issues can continue to be discussed.

Finally, as you move towards implementation the Board must ensure that the deployment of resources continues to be closely monitored and continued engagement with staff, patients and their families will also be important in informing this work.

I would be grateful if you would continue to keep my officials regularly informed of the implementation of these proposals.



**NICOLA STURGEON**