

Notice of Motion

Wednesday 2 October 2019

Dr Gray's Hospital

Dr Gray's hospital in Elgin is a vital component of our health system in Moray with a range of medical services offered. The services on offer help ensure that people within Moray and West Aberdeenshire have the ability to access high quality hospital related treatments and assessments within a reasonable distance of their home.

Dr Gray's hospital is a district general hospital operated by NHS Grampian.

As has been widely publicised Dr Gray's has suffered from several issues over the last few years, which has affected the delivery of local services. Of particular note have been issues around staffing with fundamental changes to the paediatrics and obstetrics & gynaecology as well as resultant pressures on the emergency department and other areas of the hospital.

With many thousands of people each year accessing services through Dr Grays and communities concerned, as seen through the consultation exercise and public meetings in 2018, we believe it is vital the council take an active interest and concern about Dr Gray's.

A consultation on the proposed future model of children's services in Dr Gray's hospital is open until the 27th September 2019.

With this in mind we ask council to approve the following recommendations –

- That the Council Leader writes a letter to the Chief Executive of NHS Grampian and the Chair of NHS Grampian in response to the above mentioned consultation expressing the views of the council in relation to children's services in the following terms.
- That the Council representative on the board of NHS Grampian ensures the views of the Council are known and discussed during official meetings.

Cllr Frank Brown

Cllr Tim Eagle

Notes:

1. Given the complexity of the situation the proposers are willing to work with group leaders in advance of the meeting to agree an alternative form of wording which is mutually acceptable to all groups.

Dear Dr Lynch and Ms Croft,

RE: The future of Dr Gray's hospital, Elgin and consultation on the proposed future model of Children's services in Dr Gray's Hospital

We wish to extend our thanks to you and the wider NHS Grampian staff for the commitment and reassurance you have provided in regards to the future of Dr Gray's hospital in Moray. We thank you for the work you have done and will continue to put in to ensure the long term sustainability of the hospital and would extend our support to you in that aim.

Moray Council remains deeply concerned about the on-going problems that affect Dr Gray's hospital particularly in relation to the paediatric ward and also in respect of obstetrics and gynaecology and resulting pressures on other departments.

This council sees Dr Gray's and all the currently provided services as a vital part of our infrastructure and one which we would like to see grow in service provision. Our communities tell us that the ability to be seen locally for routine appointments and the reassurances provided by having a district general hospital are very important to them.

We wish to make comment on the current paediatric consultation due to close on the 27th September 2019.

We understand that the staffing issues which now effect Dr Gray's have been evident for some time with previous reports of GP Trainees commenting that the pressures of ward/theatre work reduced the learning potential of their training programmes. We welcome that the new models being discussed seek to change this but we remain curious what attempts had previously been made to address this issue prior to the severity of the staffing crisis hitting in 2018. It is our feeling that this may have impacted on the reduction in GP trainees wishing to train through Dr Gray's and will now take some time for that trend to change back. We are hopeful that the current GP Trainees have found the hospital a much better environment for work and training and we urge that all is done to continue to try and attract medical trainees.

The new model being proposed is for a 24hr, 7 day a week paediatric assessment and care unit at Dr Gray's hospital. The consultation makes clear that the average stay on the ward is currently less than 24 hours. What it does not make clear is when this figure was taken from or how much less than 24 hours the average stay is. If it was much over the 24 hour mark then would it be fair to assume a much larger amount of children will require transfer to Aberdeen? We understand that the new model has been based upon the guidelines as laid down by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. We would like confirmation that this is based upon the Standard for short-stay paediatric assessment units (SSPAUs)? If the new model has been based upon this guideline then our understanding is this is a change from the previous description of the ward in Dr Gray's. This particular guideline is described as an increasingly common component of urgent and emergency care for children, and as a hub for the provision and coordination of emergency ambulatory care. If this is the case then are we now saying that we are not offering a full

paediatric service anymore but a ward centred on emergency care only. We are concerned that children who previously would have been perfectly safe in Dr Gray's such as those with needing short respiratory care over 24hr will now face journeys to Aberdeen with the resulting disruption to family life. We wish to be clear that we want the very best care for our children and young people and understand that Dr Gray's will never offer the range of services a major centre like Aberdeen or Glasgow would but equally we do think Dr Gray's should maintain the best safe service it can. We are unclear on how the proposed community paediatric nursing support unit will work and what conditions medical staff feel will be best be served by this kind of service. Can we be assured that all GPs' understand the elements of this service and what communication will be provided between the service and primary care practices? We would welcome further information on this service and detailed consultation with primary care providers across Moray so all are clear on the method by which this unit would be best used.

We mentioned training above. We remain unclear why Dr Gray's is unable to have specialist doctors in training that could help support the wards. Information given to us suggests that in the past Dr Gray's hospital did have doctors in training on an obstetrics and gynaecology programme rotating through Dr Gray's as part of that training model. We remain curious how the proposed changes across the paediatrics and Obstetrics and Gynaecology unit will impact upon our ability to have specialist doctors and if there is a guarantee that this will be seriously considered and worked upon.

It is our concern that staffing remains a critical issue for healthcare across the country and particularly in Moray. Whilst we are encouraged by the range of thinking on services at Dr Gray's we are not yet confident that the proposed changes will ensure we are competitive with other hospitals in attracting new staff. We recognise that services in hospitals seldom work in isolation and so are often co-dependent on one another. We understand that already the paediatric department is reliant upon the A&E department for overnight care but also any future model for paediatrics or obstetrics and gynaecology will need a fully functioning anaesthetic service. The consultation does not provide any guarantees that this service can or will be provided especially given staffing issues as highlighted above.

In regards to other matters that affect the hospital we have significant concerns about the vulnerability facing the obstetrics and gynaecology ward. It is our understanding that there is a close relationship between both this department and the paediatric department. We remain unclear why it was that the service was recently downgraded again with several conflicting comments about levels of theatre staff, anaesthetics consultants or the unavailability of Obstetrics consultants, clarification as to the issue would be most helpful.

We believe that clear, concise communication with GP's and other primary care practitioners is vital to ensuring patient care is front and centre. We are glad to hear that communication briefs have been sent to staff throughout the area although we have received reports that those are not always timeous or clear on the direction being taken. We implore NHS Grampian to ensure that clear messages regarding service provision in Dr Gray's is made very clear to GP Practices and to GP's. We recognise that our primary care service is also under pressure with long wait times in

some practices. Our GP's are working long hours to keep onto of demand and so it is vital that information is very clear and very concise.

Whilst we highlight key concerns of the council we do, as mentioned above, thank you for the efforts to alleviate the issues facing our local hospital and we look forward to a positive working relationship with NHS Grampian moving forward.

Yours Sincerely