

Scottish Government submission of 20 February 2024

PE2078/A: Introduce mandatory licencing and inspection of private ambulance service providers

Thank you for your correspondence on 23rd January 2024 regarding Petition PE2078 on introducing mandatory licencing and inspection of private ambulance service providers. I am responding as Deputy Director for the Healthcare Quality and Improvement Division, which has policy responsibility for the regulation of independent healthcare in Scotland.

The Scottish Government can confirm that, while there is legislation to regulate independent ambulance services, this has not yet been commenced.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (“HIS”) has, by virtue of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 (“the 1978 Act”), functions in relation to the regulation of independent hospitals, private psychiatric hospitals and independent clinics. HIS’ functions in relation to independent ambulance services have not yet been commenced. Therefore, these services are not currently regulated by HIS.

An independent ambulance service is defined in the 1978 Act as meaning *a service which consists of or includes (a) provision... of medical treatment, medical care or other care to relevant patients while such patients are being transported to or from a place of medical treatment and (b) provision, at or in connection with a public event, of medical treatment outwith relevant premises under arrangements made between the provider of the service and another (whether or not the service includes a means of transport for transporting patients from the event to relevant premises).*

The immediate next step is for Scottish Government officials to continue to engage with stakeholders to explore whether the definition of “independent ambulance services” should be amended before it is commenced, in order to ensure any regulation adequately reflects services today and in the future.

In summary, work is underway to look into the regulation of independent ambulances and private first aid, and officials are engaging with HIS and other stakeholders to scope the issues involved and to consider the most appropriate and proportionate next steps. The commencement of HIS' functions in relation to regulation of independent ambulance service provision will be considered and prioritised as part of a suite of proposals regarding the regulation of independent healthcare.

Healthcare Quality and Improvement