

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

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care submission, 13 June 2024

Thank you for your letter dated 17 May 2024, regarding petition PE2078 which calls for an introduction of mandatory licencing and inspection of private ambulance service providers.

Exploring what further regulation of independent ambulance services may be necessary is an important priority for the Scottish Government, as we recognise that, while organisations providing ambulance services must comply with responsibilities as stipulated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the broader regulatory framework, as it currently stands, does not offer adequate assurance in this regard.

Provision for the regulation of independent healthcare, including independent ambulance services, was made in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 but not all of Healthcare Improvement Scotland's ("HIS") functions in relation to services have been commenced.

HIS' functions in relation to the regulation of independent hospitals was commenced in April 2011, followed by commencement in relation to regulation of independent clinics from April 2016. HIS' functions in relation to independent medical agencies will commence later this month.

This phased approach to the extension for HIS's regulatory powers is important to ensure that HIS has the capacity and appropriate staff with the necessary skillset in place to regulate the independent sector effectively.

We recognise that the definition of independent ambulance service within the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 may need revised to ensure it meets current needs.

The commencement of HIS' functions in relation to the regulation of independent ambulance services is therefore being considered as part of the next phase in the regulation of independent healthcare.

Scottish Government officials are already engaging with HIS on the regulation of independent ambulances. One of the next steps will be to undertake stakeholder engagement to gather further insight into the details required to regulate the sector effectively. Once the scope of further regulation has been developed, a public consultation will be required.

Unfortunately, it is not possible at this point to confirm a timeline of when provisions would be in place. However, I will be pleased to keep the Committee updated as these plans progress.

I hope you find my response helpful and informative.

Yours sincerely,

NEIL GRAY MSP