



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Jenni Minto MSP
Minister for Public Health and
Women's Health
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131 348-5224
Calls via RNID Typetalk:
18001 0131 348-5224

Via email only

Email: HSCS.committee@Parliament.Scot

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Dear Minister,

Request for additional information

Thank you for appearing before the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on 16 May 2023 to answer the committee's questions as part of its follow-up scrutiny of the Complex Mesh Surgical Service (CMSS).

Firstly, I wanted to express the Committee's disappointment that no clinical advisers were available to attend the meeting and to support you in answering the Committee's questions. The Committee notes that Mr O'Kelly has recently been unwell and would appreciate if you could pass on our best wishes to him for a full and speedy recovery. However, the Committee has concerns that, in Mr O'Kelly's absence, there appears to be no other source of clinical support available to the Scottish Government in this area.

During the meeting, you and Mr Chalmers agreed to provide additional information on the following areas:

The Service

The Committee spoke in detail about the establishment of the CMSS, which is primarily a surgical service. However, there remains confusion around the extent to which the Service has been set up to provide holistic care and support over and above mesh removal surgery. Please provide more detail on what support the Service is currently set up to provide and

how the Scottish Government sees the Service evolving in the future, including whether this will include aspects such as pain management and psychological and trauma support.

Patient information

You spoke about the development of a patient information leaflet, made in consultation with affected woman. You outlined that this would include information on referral pathways to the Complex Mesh Surgical Service and to independent providers. Can you confirm when that leaflet will be available to women?

Referral pathways

During the discussion, there was significant focus on referral pathways. You agreed to submit a detailed overview of the referral pathway to the Committee.

Mr Chalmers spoke about commissioning arrangements for the CMSS with NHS National Services Scotland and indicated that the current service level agreement is due to end and will be renewed soon. Mr Chalmers further indicated that this agreement would be the mechanism to seek improvements in the Service. Mr Chalmers agreed to provide a copy of the service level agreement to the Committee when it is renewed. Please advise when the Committee can expect to receive this documentation.

Mr Chalmers also spoke about a package of training for GPs on mesh complications with the aim of increasing awareness and improving referral pathways. Please provide further detail on the content of this training, alongside timescales for introduction.

Women's Health

The Committee spoke about the role of the Women's Health Champion. Please provide further detail of any work you envisage the Champion undertaking to promote good pelvic health and preventative education.

You also agreed to provide more detail on the Scottish Government's plan for reviewing its incontinence strategy.

Medical records and the role of GPs

Mr Chalmers spoke about a planned registry of pelvic mesh devices that have been fitted and removed, highlighting a current trial with four NHS boards. Please provide more detail on this trial, along with timescales for further implementation. Mr Chalmers also agreed to provide more information on what will be included as part of this registry, including the extent to which it will or will not apply to other types of mesh device such as hernia mesh.

Mr Chalmers further agreed to provide more information on how any such data platforms would integrate with existing systems in primary care.

Credentialling

The Committee discussed the credentialling of clinicians undertaking mesh removal surgery across the four nations. You committed to provide an update on the progress of this work, including numbers of those trained.

In addition, the Committee has several further questions around credentialling:

- What is the Scottish Government's position on credentialling?
- How can women be assured that the surgeons working in the CMSS have the requisite skills and training to perform complex removal surgery?
- When the national service was set up, what requirements and assurances were provided to demonstrate that the surgeons were competent in mesh removal?
- Are all the surgeons and mesh specialists in the service now on the Royal College's credentialling pathway? If not, why not?
- Do you envisage credentialling within primary care?

Staffing

In reference to the current vacancy for a Urogynaecology Specialist Consultant within the CMSS, the Committee is aware that the post was vacated in July 2022 and recruitment for the vacancy has so far been unsuccessful. The Committee was advised that the post will be re-advertised in May 2023. Can you provide an update on the process and anticipated timeframe for recruitment and what action is being undertaken to ensure this is successful?

To assist the Committee's ongoing work to undertake follow-up scrutiny of the Complex Mesh Surgical Service, I would be grateful to receive a response by **Friday 2 June 2023** and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Clare Haughey MSP
Convener, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee