LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ACUTE SERVICES, NHS GRAMPIAN TO THE CONVENER OF THE PUBLIC AUDIT COMMITTEE, 21 JUNE 2010

Dear Mr Henry


Thank you for your letter of 2nd June 2010 requesting further information on children presenting to NHS services under the influence of alcohol.

The statement made during the Committee Meeting on 24th March 2010 followed discussions with clinical and non-clinical colleagues in the A&E Departments of NHS Grampian.

They report an increase in the number of children and young people presenting under the influence of alcohol over the past 10 years. They also report an increase in the number of young people who appear to be “binge drinking” and the assumption made is that young people are drinking more heavily when compared with the situation 10 years ago.

Unfortunately, the data to support these statements is difficult to obtain due to the lack of a consistent and replicable information system across Scotland. This is further complicated by a change in the age limits for admission to our children’s hospital (from 14 years to 18 years).

However, I have appended to this letter the information obtained and gathered locally. Please note that these figures will underestimate the number of alcohol-related attendances and also that they do not give any indication of the severity of the alcohol related attendance.

You will see from the figures that whilst the absolute numbers are relatively small, there has been a real increase over the past 10 years.

I trust that this additional information is helpful.

Yours sincerely
Dr Pauline Strachan
Chief Operating Officer
As it is not formally recorded in EDIS or PAS whether the effect of alcohol is a contributing factor to a patient's attendance, please note that these figures are not an accurate or true representation of the impact these types of presentation have on the Emergency Department.
LETTER FROM THE CONVENER OF THE PUBLIC AUDIT COMMITTEE TO THE
DIRECTOR OF ACUTE SERVICES, NHS GRAMPIAN, 02 JUNE 2010

Dear Dr Strachan

INQUIRY INTO THE AUDITOR GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND’S REPORT: OVERVIEW
OF THE NHS IN SCOTLAND’S PERFORMANCE 2008/09

At its meeting on 26 May, the Public Audit Committee considered a written response from
Dr Kevin Woods, Director-General Health, on the presentation of young people under the
influence of alcohol to Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments. I attach a copy of
that written response (together with the Committee’s original request for additional
information) in Annexe A of this letter for your information.

At its meeting the Committee noted Dr Wood’s comment that data on A&E admission
involving alcohol use are currently not held centrally (although this may change as a result
of the national A&E data set being developed by Information Service Division).

The Committee noted however, that in your evidence to the Committee on 24 March you
had observed that “The number of children under the age of 16 presenting drunk at our A
and E departments has increased by, I believe, some 60 percent.”

The Committee would therefore welcome further information from you on how the figure
you quote is derived including any background information you may consider relevant.

I would be grateful if you could provide your response by 15 June 2010 and, in that
regard, I would draw your attention to the Parliament’s policy on written evidence which is
also attached to this letter (Annexe B). Should this deadline give you any difficulties please
do not hesitate to contact the clerk.

An extract of the Official Report of the meeting will be available on from 2 June at the
following link:


Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the clerk to
the Committee, Jane Williams, on 0131 348 5390 or by email at
pa.committee@scottish.parliament.uk.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Henry MSP
Convener
Public Audit Committee