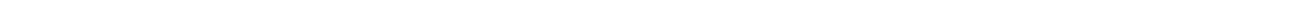


# **Policy for the Receipt and Management of Petitions**

NHS Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning  
Group

(The “CCG”)



## Reader information

Reference	P01
Directorate	Operations
Document purpose	To detail the policy of the organisation in how Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning group will receive and manage petitions from the local community, patients and public.
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Title	Policy for the Receipt and Management of Petitions
Author	Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning Group
Nominated Lead	Hazel Buchanan, Director of Operations, Nottingham North & East CCG
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Approving Committee	Governing Body
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Circulation list	All Staff
Associated documents	The NHS Constitution
Superseded documents	None
Sponsoring Director	Hazel Buchanan, Director of Operations

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 A petition represents the expression of the views of the people who sign it and petitions are an important mechanism for the expression of community views and the public voice. However, to avoid the danger of listening only to active, vocal groups, petitions should not be viewed in isolation but as one piece of evidence and information which contributes to an overall picture of public sentiment.
- 1.2 This policy outlines the guidance in how NHS Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning Group will handle any petitions from the local community, patients, service users and members of the public.
- 1.3 This guidance is relevant to the receipt and management of either paper or e-petitions.
- 1.4 It sets out two circumstances in which petitions may be received; outside a formal consultation period or during a formal consultation period.

## **2.0 Definition**

For the purpose of this policy a petition is defined as a written document signed by a number of people demanding some form of action from the CCG.

## **3.0 Policy Context**

- 3.1 There is currently no clear, legally binding guidance to the National Health Service (NHS) on handling petitions. Whilst the intention to introduce a clear framework was set out in Our Health, Our Care, Our Say (Department of Health, 2006), this was not subsequently transferred into policy.
- 3.2 When considering the receipt and management of e-petitions, the CCG wishes to ensure it follows best practice. The CCG has drawn on published terms and conditions for submitting e-petitions, utilised by HM Government.

## **4.0 Criteria for the consideration of petitions**

- 4.1 In order to be received for consideration, petitions should meet the criteria outline below:
  - 1) Petitions may be received in paper or electronic format.
  - 2) Petitions should include a statement of petition on each page, which should comprise:
    - a) the organisation to which the petitions is being addressed
    - b) the proposition which is being promoted by the petition
    - c) the timeline over which the petition has been collected
    - d) the following information about each petitioner should be included:
      - Name
      - Address
      - Signature (in case of a written petition)
      - Email address (in the case of an electronic petition)

3) The name and address of the petition organiser, who must be resident within the area to which the petition relates, should be printed on the first page of the petition.

4.2 Petitions will not be considered if the information contained is confidential, false, defamatory or offensive. Petitions will not be considered if they are repeated, vexatious or if they concern issues which are outside the CCG's remit and will only be considered if they meet the criteria outlined above.

1) A petition will be considered as a repeat petition if:

- a) it covers the same or substantially similar subject matter to another petition received within the previous six months;
- b) it is presented by the same or similar individuals or groups as another petition received within the previous six months.

2) A petition will be considered as a vexatious petition if:

- a) it focuses on individual grievances

3) A petition will be considered as outside the CCG's remit if:

- a) it focuses on a matter relevant to another organisation
- b) it requests information available via Freedom of Information legislation
- c) its aim is to correspond on personal issue(s) with an individual(s)

4) A petition will be considered as confidential, libellous, false or defamatory if:

- a) it contains information which may be protected by an injunction or court order
- b) it contains material which is potentially confidential, commercially sensitive, or which may cause personal distress or loss

5) A petition will be considered as offensive if:

- a) it contains language that may cause offence, is provocative or extreme in its views

4.3. Where a petition does not meet the requirements set out in the criteria above then the relevant Director will respond in writing within ten working days to confirm that the petition has been received and that, as the petition does not meet the criteria, no response will be provided.

## **5.0 Petitions received outside of a formal consultation period**

5.1 For petitions received outside a formal consultation period, the Chairman will delegate responsibility for receiving a petition to their nominated representative.

5.2 The Chair's nominated Governing Body member will arrange for a short private meeting with the Petition Organiser to formally receive the Petition. All photographic opportunities may be politely declined by the CCG during this meeting. The CCG's communications

and engagement lead will work with the petition organiser on a media statement containing quotes from the CCG and petition organiser.

- 5.3 Once received, the Chair's nominated representative will ensure that the petition receives appropriate and proportionate consideration at the next available Governing Body meeting and that a response is made in writing.

## **6.0 Petitions received during a formal consultation period**

- 6.1 Where a petition concerns an issue out for formal consultation it will be considered as an item of correspondence, in the same way that any other response would be considered. Petitions will be considered as valid for consideration as part of consultation if they meet the requirements set out in the criteria outlined in section 4.0 of this policy.

- 6.2 All petitions received will be shared with Healthwatch Nottinghamshire and Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s) as part of the report on views received during consultation and the overall results of the consultation.

- 6.3 When a report on the outcome of consultation is prepared, the following issues will be taken into account when considering a petition:

- Consultation is not a public vote. Influence will be afforded to the most cogent ideas and arguments, and not necessarily to the views of the most numerous stakeholders.
- The petition should be relevant to the subject of the consultation. It may not necessarily use the same words, but it should have a bearing on the proposal(s) that the CCG has put forward.
- The petition should provide an accurate reflection of the proposals in the consultation, rather than including misleading information or statements.
- The petition should relate to the consultation and to the proposed action of the CCG (and/or its stakeholders), rather than to broader policy agenda beyond the scope of the consultation.
- The petition's concerns will be assessed in relation to the aims being put forward in the consultation, and the rationale and constraints behind it. For example, a petition that proposes a realistic alternative option will normally be given greater weight than a petition that simply opposes an option that has been put forward for valid reasons.
- The petition's concerns will also be assessed in relation to the impact on other populations if these demands were accepted. This assessment could take into account views expressed in other petitions (which may conflict) or in more direct responses to the consultation.

- 6.4 The organiser of the petition will receive correspondence from the CCG as the body that has initiated the consultation, in the same manner as other respondents (e.g. acknowledgement, an outcome briefing describing how the issues raised during consultation have influenced the decisions made following consultation).

6.5 Petitions will be formally acknowledged in the analysis of consultation responses, along with all the other responses. If what petitioners call for is accepted or rejected, the reasons for this should be given, set out against a transparent set of criteria.