

		THE HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE	
Boston Borough Council	East Lindsey District Council	City of Lincoln Council	Lincolnshire County Council
North Kesteven District Council	South Holland District Council	South Kesteven District Council	West Lindsey District Council

RESPONSE OF HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR LINCOLNSHIRE TO THE CONSULTATION ON NUCLEAR MEDICINE AT UNITED LINCOLNSHIRE HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

PART A – INTRODUCTION

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire is grateful to United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust for its presentation on the consultation on Nuclear Medicine on 15 March 2022, which followed an introductory item to the Committee on 15 September 2021.

The response of the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire is based on the information in the consultation document, the report submitted to the Committee on 15 September 2021, and the discussion at the meetings on 15 September 2021 and 16 March 2022.

Part B relates to the questions in the survey document. Part C provides a general statement on behalf of the Committee.

PART B – RESPONSE TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

SERVICE CHANGE PROPOSAL

This consultation is on the future of nuclear medicine services in Lincolnshire. Nuclear medicine services are currently provided at Grantham and District Hospital, Lincoln County Hospital and Pilgrim Hospital, Boston.

Due to the fact the nuclear medicine is a very specialist service, there are a number of challenges it faces nationally, and we have these same challenges in Lincolnshire including:

- A shortage of staff
- Workload of the service which only requires three gamma cameras but we have five
- The age of the gamma cameras, all of which are over 10 years old and cost £0.5million per camera to replace
- The impact of other services, specifically the redevelopment of the Emergency Department at Pilgrim Hospital which means that the nuclear medicine department will need to be moved.

We believe that the safest way to provide a sustainable, long term service to the patients of Lincolnshire is to reduce the number of sites that the nuclear medicine service is provided from. This will reduce the redundancy of equipment and create a greater capacity to replace aged equipment.

Q1. How much do you agree or disagree that the Nuclear Medicine service needs to change to ensure a safe and sustainable service to patients in Lincolnshire?

Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
		✓		

Q2. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following options.

Our clinicians, expert staff and patient representatives have looked at different ways that we could deliver these services in the future and they are explained in more detail in the consultation document.

We believe that centralising the service to either one or two sites would ensure a robust service for the people of Lincolnshire. The radio-pharmacy has recently been built at Lincoln County Hospital and this cannot be moved, therefore closing Lincoln was not considered as an option.

As a result of our option appraisal work, this consultation is on the following two options. These are:

Option 1- Centralisation of the Service at Lincoln

Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
		✓		

Option 2- Centralisation of the Service at two sites- Lincoln and Pilgrim

Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
		✓		

Q3. What is your preferred choice for changes to nuclear medicine services? (please choose only 1 answer)

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Option 1: Centralisation of the service at Lincoln

Option 2: Centralisation of the service at two sites- Lincoln and Pilgrim

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire does not support either option 1 or option 2. The Committee's reasons for this answer are set out in its response to question 4 below.

Q4. Please tell us why you chose your preferred option and if you have any other suggested proposals to address the identified challenges

As stated in response to question 3, the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire cannot support either options 1 or 2.

Option 1

The Committee is very concerned that the consultation exercise pre-supposes a conclusion that the nuclear medicine service will be centralised at Lincoln County Hospital, so cannot support option 1.

(1) Impact on Patients - This would represent another example of service being centralised at Lincoln and would displace 1,872 patients per annum from Pilgrim Hospital Boston and Grantham and District Hospital, based on the patient numbers for 2019-20. This figure of 1,872 patients per annum represents 45% of the patients using the service.

(2) Impact on Staffing - The difficulties in recruiting, training and retaining staff have been explained to the Committee and are set out in the consultation document. Whilst these are acknowledged, patient numbers over recent years have not reduced, and it is not clear how these difficulties would be addressed by a centralised service. Therefore, the Committee is not completely convinced that the proposals will lead to

improvements in the recruitment and retention of both medical and nursing staff.

- (3) Age of Gamma Cameras – As stated in the consultation document all the Trust’s five gamma cameras are over ten years old. It is not easy for the Committee to accept this as a reason for reconfiguring the service, as option 1 would require the purchase of at least one gamma camera. If cameras are unreliable because of their age, the Trust should be seeking replacement of at least two cameras as soon as possible, irrespective of the service configuration.
- (4) Car Parking - On a practical level, another service being centralised at Lincoln puts yet more strain on the patient car park at Lincoln County Hospital, which at times cannot be accessed because it is full.

Option 2

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire cannot support option 2 for the following reasons:

- (1) This would represent a further example of service being removed from Grantham and District Hospital, where based on the figures for 2019-22 680 people per annum use the service, representing 21% of the patients. This further undermines the confidence of the community in Grantham to the Trust’s commitment to the hospital.
- (2) The difficulties in recruiting, training and retaining staff have been explained to the Committee and are set out in the consultation document. Whilst these are acknowledged, patient numbers over recent years have not reduced, and it is not clear how these difficulties would be addressed by the proposal in Option 2. Therefore, the Committee is not completely convinced that this proposal will lead to improvements in the recruitment and retention of both medical and nursing staff.
- (3) Age of Gamma Cameras – As stated in the consultation document all the Trust’s five gamma cameras are over ten years old, with the oldest at Grantham and District Hospital being 16 years old. It is not easy for the Committee to accept this as a reason for reconfiguring the service, as option 2 would require the purchase of at least two gamma cameras. If cameras are unreliable because of their age, the Trust should be seeking replacement of at least two cameras as soon as possible, irrespective of the service configuration.
- (4) Car Parking - On a practical level, option 2 will lead to more patients attending both Boston and Lincoln and will puts more strain on the patient car park at these two hospitals.

Q5. Please tell us about the impact the proposed changes to nuclear medicine services might have on you:

<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

No Impact

Positive Impact

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>

Negative Impact

Prefer Not to Say

Q6. Please tell us the reason for your answer and what could be done to reduce any negative impacts:

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire would like to cite the following negative impacts:

(1) Travel and Transport – As stated in the response to question 4, between 700 and 1,500 would be travelling to different sites depending on the chosen option. Not only does this represent a challenge in a rural county such as Lincolnshire without fully developed public transport, it will also cause patients increased costs irrespective whether public transport.

The consultation document states: “There is also support with transport if required.” Detailed eligibility criteria for non-emergency patient transport are being considered by the government. Thus any mitigation is reliant on these criteria containing enough local discretion to enable this service to be available.

(2) Need to Transfer Inpatients – Although the consultation document states that most nuclear medicine is provided to outpatients, there would be some inpatients (not quantified in the consultation document) who would need to travel.

The mitigation in the consultation document refers to transfers between sites already taking place, but there is no indication of how many this would increase by.

(3) Patient Car Parking – The Committee’s answer to question 4 is reiterated.

The mitigation would be increasing patient car parking.

Q7. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of the nine protected characteristics which are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Are there any positive or negative impacts that you believe we should take into account in relation to equalities or human rights? If so, are you able to provide any supporting evidence and suggest any ways in which the organisations could reduce or remove any potential negative impacts and increase any positive impacts?

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire is not aware whether an equalities impact assessment has been undertaken on the two options. If one has been prepared, it was not made available as part of the consultation materials.

The Committee would like to stress that the combination of an ageing population, a rural geography and areas of high socio-economic deprivation, particularly on the east coast, are demonstrative of the challenges of providing NHS services in Lincolnshire. Thus, the Committee would like to highlight these as part of the ULHT Board's consideration of its decision on the consultation.

PART C – GENERAL STATEMENT AND CONCLUSION

As stated above, the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire would again record its thanks to the UHLT for its engagement at two Committee meetings: 15 September 2021 and 16 March 2022.

The Committee is not convinced by the arguments put forward in support of this reconfiguration, and is disappointed that no consultation option was put forward enabling the service to continue at both Boston and Grantham, as well as Lincoln. For the Committee, the recurring theme of recent years has been the gradual erosion of hospital services in Grantham, and the centralisation of services at Lincoln.

The Committee wonders if the recruitment, training and retention of the highly specialised staff were not a challenge at the Trust, whether any proposals for reconfiguration would have been made.

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire has been appointed by Lincolnshire County Council to fulfil its functions as set out in Section 244 of the National Health Service Act 2006 and Regulations 20 – 34 of the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

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