

Policy Briefing –

Pilot Health Board Elections Update



scottish
health
council

making sure
your voice counts

Introduction

The Health Board (Membership and Elections) (Scotland) Act 2009 was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 12th March 2009. The Act introduced powers to: conduct pilot elections to Health Boards; carry out an evaluation of those pilots; report back to the Scottish Parliament on the outcome of the pilots; and for the Scottish Parliament decide whether this process should be rolled out across Scotland. The aim of the Act is to improve public engagement and participation in the development of health services, ensuring that the public has a say in the decision making process.

This paper provides an update on progress with plans for the pilot elections and alternative pilots. It follows an earlier Scottish Health Council policy briefing published in July 2008 after the Bill was introduced in Parliament.

Pilot Elections

Pilot elections to Health Boards will be held in two NHS Boards areas: Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. The elections will ensure that elected members and councillor members (from a local authority within the Health Board area) form the majority of those two Health Boards. The majority will therefore have been democratically elected either through the Health Board elections process or through a local government election process.

Rules for the elections are set out in regulations¹. Notably and for the first time in the UK, 16 and 17 years olds will be able to vote or to stand as a candidate. Voting will be by postal vote only, using the Single Transferrable Vote system.

Local authority Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers are running the elections in each area. They have been working to prepare for the elections since the Act was passed.

The elections are required to be called between 15th and 22nd April. Candidates must submit completed nomination papers to the Returning Officers by 6th May. Election packs will be sent to voters shortly after this, with voting closing on 10th June. Successful candidates will take up their post as an elected member as soon as the result is

¹ Health Board Elections (Scotland) Regulations 2009. SSI 2009 No. 352.

declared. The Scottish Government Health Directorates will be providing a national induction course for newly elected members in June and this will be followed by local induction.

Work has been underway in both Health Board areas to raise awareness of local people about the elections. Promotional activity has included work to specifically target 16 and 17 year olds to ensure that they are able to exercise this new opportunity to vote.

Alternative Pilots

There will be two alternative pilot schemes running at the same time as the pilots for elected Health Boards. These alternative schemes will introduce other means of improving public engagement and involvement in Health Boards. These are:

- 1. NHS Lothian** – Two new non-executive members will be appointed to the Board. One of these individuals will be chosen from the local Public Partnership Forums. The process for selecting a candidate began on 16th March and will be concluded by 10th June. The other member will be from NHS Lothian's Patient Representative Forums and will be appointed through the public appointments process, targeted towards patient groups.
- 2. NHS Grampian** – Two new non-executive members will be appointed to the Board of NHS Grampian. Although these appointments will follow the public appointments process, the vacancies are being marketed in different ways than public appointments are usually marketed, with NHS Grampian promoting the vacancies through their existing patient and public participation networks.

Evaluation

Pilots will run for a minimum of two years. Both the pilot elections and the alternative pilots will be subject to full independent evaluation. Following a competitive tendering process, the contract for this work has been awarded to the London School of Economics (with the University of St. Andrew's and University of Michigan). The Scottish Government has met with the evaluation team and agreed key milestones for their work. The evaluation report will be considered by the Scottish Parliament.

Comments or Queries

If you have any comments or queries about the issues covered in this briefing paper, contact: Sandra McDougall, Head of Policy

Email: sandra.mcdougall@scottishhealthcouncil.org Tel: 0141 225 5560

To find out more about the Scottish Health Council, visit: www.scottishhealthcouncil.org