



*Coastal West Sussex
Clinical Commissioning Group*

Receipt and Management of Petitions Policy

Version	Date Issued	Details	Brief Summary of Change	Author
1.0	01/06/2014	Final	Final version	Head of Comms
1.1	15/12/2016	Final	Policy reviewed. No changes. Dates updated.	Head of Comms

For more information on the status of this policy, please contact:	
Approved by	Glynn Dodd
Approval Date	December 2016
Next Review Date	December 2018
Responsibility for Review	Communications Team
Contributors	Communications Team
Audience	All staff

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Receipt and Management of Petitions

1. Introduction

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.

This guidance outlines how NHS Coastal West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CSW CCG) will handle any petitions from the local community. This guidance is relevant to the receipt and management of either paper or e-petitions.

It sets out two circumstances in which petitions may be received: outside a formal consultation period or during a formal consultation period.

2. Context

There is currently no clear, legally binding guidance to the 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 translated into policy.

When considering the receipt and management of petitions – either paper or via the internet, the CCG wishes to ensure it follows best practice. CSW CCG has drawn on published terms and conditions for submitting e-petitions, utilised by HM Government.

3. Criteria for the consideration of petitions

In order to be received for consideration, petitions should meet the criteria outlined 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 petition is being addressed
 - b. the proposition which is being promoted by the petition
 - c. the timeframe over which the petition has been collected
 - d. the following information about each petitioner should be included:
 - Name
 - Address
 - Signature (in the case of a written petition)
 - Email address (in the case of an electronic petition)
3. To be considered as a petition, the document needs to contain the signatures of a minimum of 500 people.

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.

Petitions will not be considered if they are repeated, vexatious or if they concern issues which are outside CSW CCG's remit. Petitions will also not be considered if the information contained is confidential, libellous, false, defamatory or offensive.

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.

A petition will be considered as a vexatious petition if:

- a. it focuses on individual grievances.

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).

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.

A petition will be considered as offensive if:

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

Where a petition does not meet the requirement 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.

4. Petitions received outside formal consultation period

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

The Chair's nominated Board 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 CSW CCG during this meeting.

Once received the Chair's nominated representative will ensure that the petition receives appropriate and proportionate consideration at the next available Board Meeting and that a response is made in writing.

5. Petitions received during a formal consultation period

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 the consultation if they meet the requirements set out in section 3 of this policy.

All petitions received will be shared with the relevant Healthwatch group and Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee as part of the report on views received during consultation and the overall results of the consultation.

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 CSW CCG has put forward.
- The petition should reflect the latest proposals and policy statements being made by CSW CCG and not relate to issues that are no longer under consideration. This is particularly relevant when considering the timescale during which signatures have been collected.
- 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 CSW 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.

The organiser of the petition will receive correspondence from CSW CCG as the body that has initiated the consultation, in the same manner as other respondents (e.g.

acknowledgement, an outcome letter describing how the issues raised during consultation have influenced the decisions made following consultation).

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.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner should relevant legislation or guidance be published.

Appendix A- Completed Equality Analysis Checklist

1	Does the policy /guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:	Yes/No	Comments
	Race	No	
	Ethnic Origin	No	
	Nationality	No	
	Gender	No	
	Culture	No	
	Religion or belief	No	
	Sexual orientation including lesbian gay and bi-sexual people.	No	
	Age	No	
	Disability (e.g. physical, sensory or learning)	No	Petitions can be accepted in paper or electronic format and so are accessible to users of different media
	Mental Health	No	
2	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	
3	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	n/a	
4	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	No	
5	If so can the impact be avoided?	n/a	
6	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?	n/a	