

Charter of Patient Rights & Responsibilities

The Equality and Human Rights Commission welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Scottish Government's draft Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities.

The Charter is a useful summary of what NHS service users should expect in Scotland, and is built on solid equality and human rights principles such as respect, safety and transparency. It should of course be seen as a means of illustrating these principles, and not as displacing the legal responsibilities placed on public bodies by the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

The Commission would however like to draw attention to the provisions under the section on Communication and Participation. We very much welcome the commitment address a range of communication needs through the provision of information in alternative formats – “You can expect to be given information about your care and treatment in a format or language that meets your needs (for example in audio format or in a language other than English)”; there is however no right to communication support in the

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The Equality and Human Rights Commission was established by the Equality Act 2006 as the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

form of interpretation, only a right to ask for such support – “If you need an interpreter or a sign-language interpreter, or other communication support, you can ask a member of staff to arrange help for you in advance.” The Commission would welcome a consistent approach for all communication support needs, one where the emphasis is on what service users can expect. Individuals’ communication needs can be complex, multiple and variable, and the emphasis throughout should be on what users of the NHS can reasonably expect, to allow them to exercise their right to be informed and involved in decisions about their health and care.

I hope this information is useful: please do not hesitate to call me to discuss further.

Yours sincerely