

PE1424/A

**NHS GREATER GLASGOW AND CLYDE
RESPONSE TO CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1524**

NHSGGC Current Service Description

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) have provided public and patient wireless internet access in a growing proportion of Acute Hospitals and Health Centres over the last three years.

The service is provided free of charge to users and is delivered cost effectively by utilising the same hardware that provides organisational wireless services. While by no means entirely pervasive in every hospital (as the wireless infrastructure is primarily intended to enable mobile clinical care), it does, in addition to Wards, generally cover coffee shops and restaurants where members of the public might be expected to gather or spend time. To give an indication of scale, there are currently 2,000 wireless access points across the NHSGGC estate and the New SGH and Children's Hospital will add a further 2,800.

Users are required to log onto this service using a valid email address and a password provided by NHSGGC as well as accepting a set of terms and conditions outlining, amongst other things, expectations on behaviour while using the service, legal compliance and limitations on liability.

The security of the NHSGGC wireless infrastructure is primarily aimed at separating and securing the NHS network from the public facing elements. In order to make it easy to use, the public SSID (Service Set Identifier or wireless network name) does not use an encryption password and so data on the public network could conceivably be intercepted a fact that is also noted in the Terms and Conditions.

Provision of free internet access along with a duty of care to our own staff impose both legislative and ethical responsibility on us to filter web access and additionally to record activity in order to prevent abuse of the system. While the petitioner suggested that if it wasn't illegal we shouldn't filter it, the counter would be that it doesn't have to be illegal to be objectionable.

The underpinning internet access for the service is 100Mb/s but the performance for any individual user is directly related to user concurrency and what they are doing, eg, as few as 50 people watching BBC iPlayer HD across an estate the scale of NHSGGC would be sufficient to saturate the currently available bandwidth.

Further Direct Comments on the Petition

- Many individuals in possession of "smart" devices will already have access to the internet via a data tariff from a mobile carrier, with a significant proportion likely to be on an unlimited data basis making provision of wireless services in addition of no value.
- The cost of internet bandwidth and of supporting any technical service is significant and given the current constraints on public funding, it is difficult for a health organisation to justify revenue expenditure on free internet access rather than direct patient care.
- Some degree of documented standards on provision of free WiFi might well be beneficial in guiding organisations on best practice in formulating a service should they wish to do so.
- Low population density and geography will continue to be a problem for equity of internet access across Scotland irrespective of how this is delivered and not something that can or should be tackled by individual public sector organisations.

- ISPs, mobile telecoms providers or similar third parties should be encouraged to provision such services, either as an entirely altruistic offering or perhaps subsidised by advertising, etc, as they have more expertise, capacity and reach to deliver standardised, robust, reliable and secure services.