Initial Report on the consultation on
NHS Lothian Homeopathy Services

14 February 2013
Amended 15 March 2013
Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012 NHS Lothian through Midlothian Community Health Partnership (CHP) undertook a review of the homeopathic services that are currently provided. The CHP established a stakeholder group to support the development of a consultation document and questionnaire to assess whether people in Lothian thought NHS Lothian should continue to pay for homeopathic services. The consultation began on 10th September 2012 and closed on 10th December 2012.

The homeopathy service costs for NHS Lothian are estimated to be £240,000 a year. This includes staff costs and the associated overhead costs of running clinics, the costs of referrals to Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital and all associated clinic prescribing costs together with GP prescribing. Within these total service costs £53,483 is the fixed costs of buildings and support services and £175,800 is the direct costs of the service, for example staffing, referrals to Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital and drugs.

In total there were 3,720 responses to the questionnaire, (3,350 electronic and 367 paper responses).

The results of all consultation responses (3,720 electronic and paper responses) to the questionnaire were:

- 72% (2,677) thought NHS Lothian should not pay for homeopathy
- 27% (1,000) thought NHS Lothian should continue to pay for homeopathy
- 1% (43) were undecided

The results from the Lothian individual respondents (2,626, paper and electronic) were:

- 74% (1,930) thought NHS Lothian should not pay for homeopathy
- 25% (664) thought NHS Lothian should continue to pay for homeopathy
- 1% (32) were undecided

There were also four responses from groups and four public meetings. Details of the review, the consultation process and the results are provided in this report.

The results will be considered by the Midlothian Community Health Partnership Committee as well as the West Lothian Community Health and Care Partnership, Edinburgh Community Health Partnership and East Lothian
Community Health Partnership in advance of any final recommendations being taken if appropriate to the NHS Lothian Board

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 NHS Lothian in considering whether it should continue to pay for homeopathy services invited people to give their views. The consultation document, which set out the issues, is in appendix 1.

1.2 There is increasing demand for health services and increasing financial pressures in the current economic climate. NHS Lothian also faces the challenge of being the health board with the biggest population growth in Scotland. NHS Lothian is looking at the way it provides all its services, to see if it can provide them more efficiently and whether there are any services that it can reduce or stop in order to protect other priority services.

1.3 The consultation was about homeopathy and not about herbal remedies.

2. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

2.1 A stakeholder group chaired by Dr Philip Rutledge, Consultant Public Health and Health Policy, NHS Lothian, was convened in May 2012 to support the development of the consultation document and agree the consultation process. The focus was on ‘Should NHS Lothian Pay for Homeopathy – A Consultation’. The consultation document was developed in the group and aimed to be brief and understandable to the public. An equality impact assessment was undertaken in August 2012. Membership of the stakeholder group is in appendix 2. The consultation process was discussed with the Scottish Health Council.

2.2 The consultation on whether NHS Lothian should continue to pay for homeopathy services began on 10 September 2012.

2.3 The consultation document contained a questionnaire (see appendix 1) to gather responses to the question “Should NHS Lothian pay for Homeopathy” as well as inviting further comment and information on area of residence, age and other factors. The questionnaire was also available on the NHS Lothian website for online submission. The document also invited people to post, email or phone their response to the consultation.

2.4 Press releases were issued at the start and again during the consultation period. The consultation was also highlighted in local press articles and through the BBC and other news and voluntary organisation websites (see appendix 3). There was also a lot of activity on NHS Lothian’s Twitter account.

2.5 Details of the consultation were widely distributed, which included patients of the three homeopathy clinics in Lothian, 46 people who in early 2011 had expressed an interest in supporting the service, 150 voluntary organisations (to reflect diversity), the four voluntary umbrella organisations in the four local
authorities for dissemination to voluntary organisations, Edinburgh Equalities Network, Public Partnership Forums and NHS patient forums, Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital and other referring health boards, Lothian MSPs and all Lothian councillors, NHS Lothian staff and GPs. The MSPs also received two briefings on the consultation when it began and in early December.

2.6 There were four public meetings in October held at different times across Lothian, at which people’s views were noted. Information about the meetings was publicised on the NHS Lothian website and when the consultation document was sent out.

2.7 Following a request at the first public meeting for distribution of posters to whole food establishments, posters were also distributed to them, GP practices and pharmacies.

2.8 Partly because of continuing significant interest in the consultation and partly due to the requests made at the final public meeting for the extension of the consultation period, a decision was made at the end of October to extend the closing date of the consultation from 10th November 2012 to 10th December 2012. Everyone previously contacted was informed that the consultation period was extended. Posters were re-issued and also sent to libraries and community centres across Lothian.

2.9 Information on the outcome of the consultation will be sent to all who stated that they wished to be informed and gave their contact details, placed on the NHS Lothian website and through the media.

3. HOMEOPATHY CONSULTATION – THE RESPONSE

3.1 OVERVIEW

3.1.1 The review consultation attracted individual responses to the web-based questionnaire and to its paper version by post and email. Four groups also responded. There was participation at four public meetings (held in each of the local council areas) and interest from four MSPs and one MP on behalf of constituents.

3.1.2 The consultation received responses from people living in the NHS Lothian area and neighbouring Health Board areas, but also from further afield as the questionnaire was picked up and commented on by websites supportive of homeopathy and websites taking an anti-homeopathy stance (see appendix 3 for examples).

3.1.3 The consultation received 3,353 electronic responses and 367 paper responses (including questionnaires and emails) from individuals over the 3 months that it ran, a total of 3,720 responses.

3.1.4 The analysis of responses presented in this report focuses primarily on the responses from NHS Lothian area residents as these are the main users or potential users of the Lothian homeopathy service. This also ensures that
the review reflects the views of local residents, current homeopathy service users and their representatives as well as professional colleagues and voluntary groups in Lothian.

3.1.5 The individual responses to the consultation survey (after discounting the non-Lothian responses) are 2,626: 73.5% (1,930) of the combined paper and electronic responses thought NHS Lothian should not pay for homeopathy. Of the remaining responses, 25.3% (664) were in favour of continuing funding of homeopathy and 1.2% (32) were undecided.

3.1.6 Of the 3,720 total individual survey responses, 29% came from outwith the NHS Lothian Board area, which included respondents who did not indicate where they lived. NHS Lothian Board covers West Lothian, East Lothian, Midlothian and the City of Edinburgh where 71% responded.

3.1.7 For completeness, an analysis of the wider non-Lothian responses is also presented to show the full scope of the views gathered by the consultation.

3.1.8 There were also four group responses: three in favour of continuing funding and one group with seven members not wanting funding to continue and one member wanting it to continue. These were from: the British Homeopathic Association, the Lothian Homeopathic Group, Livingston Community Council and Ladywell GP practice.

3.1.9 Most people who attended the public meetings indicated they were supportive of continued funding. The numbers attending were 13 East Lothian, 7 West Lothian, 16 Midlothian and 45 Edinburgh. Some people stated that they had submitted their comments/the questionnaire prior to the meetings, some completed the questionnaire at the meetings and others stated they would be submitting their comments/questionnaire.

3.1.10 Four MSPs and one MP expressed interest on behalf of their respective constituents in continuing funding.

3.1.11 People supportive of homeopathy made it very clear in their questionnaire returns and in their input to the public meetings that they obtained great benefit from NHS Lothian provided homeopathy.

3.1.12 People who did not want NHS Lothian to pay for homeopathy cited the lack of scientific evidence for the approach and suggested the funds allocated to homeopathy could be better spent supporting other proven services.

3.1.13 Responses to the online survey, by paper and by group are in the following sections. The reasons people gave for supporting continuing funding and not supporting are listed. The rating of the NHS Lothian Homeopathy Service is stated. Examples of the reasons people gave are in appendix 4 and a summary of public meetings in appendix 5. Demographics in relation to whether they supported continued funding or not is contained in appendix 6.
3.1.14 To put all the responses in context there were between 1300 and 1800 appointments for homeopathy in each year between 2007 and 2012 at the 3 clinics. Of these approximately 200 per year were new referrals and the remainder were follow up visits, see appendix 7 for details.

3.2 ONLINE RESPONSES

3.2.1 Lothian Residents

3.2.1.1 In response to the question ‘Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy services?’, those people who indicated they lived in the NHS Lothian Health Board area, comprising: East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian and Edinburgh replied:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1,885</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
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3.2.1.2 This group comprised 2,315 (69%) of the 3353 online survey returns.

3.2.2 Non-Lothian Residents

3.2.2.1 Within the online returns, 638 people identified that they lived outwith the NHS Lothian Board area. This included people in other parts of Scotland, the rest of the UK and beyond. In this category, the response to the question – ‘Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy services?’ was:

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<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
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3.2.2.2 Of the 638 people above, 134 were living in Scotland but outwith Lothian. Their response to the question ‘Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy services?’ was:

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<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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3.2.2.3 In addition, 400 people did not indicate where they lived. Their response to the question was:

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<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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3.2.3 All Online Responses
3.2.3.1 Therefore in total 3,353 people submitted their views in the online survey. The response to the question – ‘Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy services?’ was:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2626</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
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3.3. PAPER RESPONSES

3.3.1 Lothian Residents

3.3.1.1 In response to the question ‘Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy services?’ those people who indicated they lived in the NHS Lothian Health Board area replied:

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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
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3.3.1.2 This group comprised 311 (84.7%) of the 367 paper survey returns, which also includes email submissions.

3.3.2 Non-Lothian Residents

3.3.2.1 Within the 367 returns, 51 people stated that they lived outwith Lothian. This included people in other parts of Scotland and the rest of the UK. Their answer to the question ‘Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy services?’ was:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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3.3.2.2 Of the 51 people above, 46 were living in Scotland but outwith Lothian. Their answer to the question ‘Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy services?’ was:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>95.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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3.3.3 All Paper Responses

3.3.3.1 The response of all the 367 paper returns to the question ‘Should NHS Lothian pay for homeopathy services?’ was:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 COMMENTS – From individual online and paper (including email) responses

3.4.1 The survey invited people to comment on whether NHS Lothian should or should not continue to pay for homeopathy services, i.e. give reasons for their perspective. The online survey drew 1,948 comments and the paper survey 280 from everyone who responded. The numbers of people who made comments and lived within the NHS Lothian area were: 1498 online survey and 248 paper survey. The main reasons people gave are listed below. In addition examples of comments under the respective headings are listed in appendix 4. The comments made at the public meetings were similar to those expressed in the survey submissions and are summarised in appendix 5.

3.4.2 People who support the continued funding of homeopathy gave several reasons, some stating one aspect, while others gave several of the reasons below:

- No or few side effects, in contrast to people’s experience of conventional or allopathic medicines

- Personal experience of the benefits and effectiveness of homeopathic remedies. Many people who support continued funding spoke about their experience: for some what a lifeline it had been and for others that it benefited people with chronic conditions.

- Often people stated that they had used conventional medicine which had not been effective, but upon using homeopathic treatments the illness had been cured or managed.

- Some people acknowledged the benefits of conventional treatment, but saw homeopathy as a valuable adjunct.

- Some people saw no benefit in conventional medicine.

- Evidence that homeopathy works was cited with reference to research and the Swiss government’s statement.

- The increased cost to the NHS if the homeopathic service is withdrawn with people being referred to other specialist services and returning more frequently to their GP. That the cost implications of this had not been carried out by the review, although reference was made to a study in Tayside.

- The cost compared to other services provided by NHS Lothian, the low percentage cost compared to the overall NHS Lothian budget and the cost of pharmaceutical drugs.

- The expense for people on low income if the service is withdrawn

- Patient choice
• The length of the consultation time with the homeopathic doctor as opposed to that spent with a GP.

• Treating the whole person – holistic approach.
• The need to increase the provision of NHS homeopathy services in Lothian

3.4.3 People who do not support the continued funding of homeopathy questioned the evidence base for the approach, its ethics, cost, effectiveness, that resources would be better used for other NHS services and the current financial situation:

• Lack of evidence that homeopathy works and that the NHS should only support evidence based medicine. Some of these statements also included that it was a waste of NHS money, with some people expressing surprise and condemnation that it was funded by the NHS

• The placebo effect was the only reason it worked, with some commenting that homeopathy was not honest in stating this and the ethics of this was questioned

• Resources better spent on other NHS services, with examples
• Standards of evidence and cost effectiveness that are required to be adhered to in the NHS

• Holistic approach was acknowledged but this should be part of NHS services with longer appointment times

• Patient choice – recognition that people had choice about what they choose to access, but that this should be paid for privately

3.5 COMMENTS – from group responses

3.5.1 There were four responses from groups: the British Homeopathic Association, Lothian Homeopathic Group, Livingston Community Council and Ladywell GP practice: three in favour of continuing funding and one mainly not.

3.5.2 The British Homeopathic Association submitted a six page response on behalf of those who use or may use homeopathy services in NHS Lothian. They also directed account to be taken of Mr John Cook, the Chairman’s presentation at the public meeting in Edinburgh. They were in support of continued funding of homeopathy by NHS Lothian. The key points were:

• Evidence of the benefits of homeopathic therapies – from 6 year clinical outcomes study following up 6,544 patients showed 70% of participants were helped by homeopathy where conventional medicines alone had failed to do so.
• The effect of failing to continue to fund would impact hugely on those who use or may use, while the impact of retaining the services on individual residents in Lothian area would be negligible. Comparison of the cost per head of the total NHS Lothian budget being £1,648.18 to that of the direct costs of the Homeopathy Service (£175,800) of £0.22 per head.

• Challenging what evidence based medicine is – referring to Sir Muir Gray, Director of NHS National Knowledge article in 1996 about what evidence based medicine is or isn’t, e.g. “evidence based medicine is not restricted to randomised trials and meta-analysis. It involves tracking down the best external evidence with which to answer our clinical questions.” The UK government rejected the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee report to ban NHS Homeopathy.

• Stating that this is a major service change and will need ministerial approval, that the users and prospective users of the homeopathy service have not been properly involved and that the proper process has not been followed. Particular concern about lack of any proper development of cost/value options in conjunction with those to whom homeopathy services are being provided.

3.5.3 Margaret Wyllie, Convenor of Lothian Homeopathic Group completed the questionnaire and asked for two papers to be considered by the decision making group: a summary of the main reasons for retaining the service and some background information that the group may not be aware of when reaching a decision.

3.5.3.1 She supported the continued funding of the homeopathy service in the first paper:

• Efficacy – numerous rigorous trials show that it is more than a placebo, veterinary trials have demonstrated efficacy, patients and clinicians have shown the experience of the benefits, which is further evidence of efficacy.

• Cost – only 0.017% of the NHS Lothian budget – costs will increase as people will be referred to more expensive diagnostic tests and therapies with reference to NHS Tayside report, which compared costs and retained service.

• Patient numbers – service not advertised, patients having to request referral and saw drop in numbers following threat of closure in November 2010, concluding that it is unreasonable to use unrepresentative data from that last period.

• Benefit – “first do no harm” - particularly beneficial to the very young and very old, who are more susceptible to side effects of orthodox
medicine and particularly effective for skin, joint, allergic and psychological conditions and people with multiple pathologies. It is unlikely that NHS Lothian’s large expenditure on compensation claims will include anything in respect of homeopathy treatment.

- Post code – if funding ceases there are not sufficient GPs qualified in homeopathy to provide a service, nor is there sufficient time within a GP consultation to carry out a homeopathic assessment.

- Integrated care – given the increase in the elderly population and Scottish Government requirement for integrated care, homeopathy is ideally placed to support people to take responsibility for their own health. Expansion of the service would be cost efficient. The decision on whether to continue to fund or not should be taken by clinicians who will make the well-being of patients their first concern.

3.5.3.2 The second paper described the history of homeopathy, the bias of the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee and the activities of two groups (Edinburgh Skeptics) and Sense about Science) to stop NHS funded homeopathy and to influence NHS Trusts and Boards. In addition the paper stated there were over 150 randomised control trials (RCTs) into homeopathy, many of which proved positive and the recognition by the Chairman of NICE that RCTs have severe limitations in some areas. The challenge that not all treatments are effective: a study of 3,000 clinical trials conducted for BMJ database clinical evidence found 50% were unknown effectiveness and only 11% could be said with certainty to be beneficial and comment on the manipulation of evidence by pharmaceutical companies. The benefit of homeopathy for some people, often those who have tried conventional medicine for years, should be recognised. Finally, the paper quoted from the BMJ contributor Dr Des Spence – Good Medicine, Homeopathy – including “the therapeutic relationship and the placebo response of homeopathy can be good medicine”.

2.5.4 The Livingston Community Council members supported the continuing funding of homeopathy by NHS Lothian.

2.5.5 The Ladywell GP practice stated that seven of the GPs in the practice did not support continued funding and one GP did.

3.6 COMMENTS – Public Meetings

Public meetings were held in each of the four local authority areas in the NHS Lothian Board area, in Musselburgh, East Lothian (13 members of the public), in Livingston, West Lothian (7), in Dalkeith, Midlothian (16) and in the City of Edinburgh (45).

The meetings were chaired by representatives of patient / public forum organisations and attendees were invited to ask questions and make comments. Some people stated that they had submitted their comments/
questionnaire prior to the meetings, some completed the questionnaire at the meetings and others stated they would be submitting their comments/questionnaire.

The comments made at each of the meetings were similar and also similar to the comments submitted in the written and online responses. The summary of the comments is in appendix 5.

3.7 DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF RESPONSES

3.7.1 The data in appendix 6 shows the view of people who had used the NHS Lothian Homeopathy Service. Question three asked those people to rate their experience of the service on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent. 402 people from Lothian and a further 37 from outside Lothian answered this question: of the 402 Lothian residents, 89% had rated the service 7 or above, with 55% rating it 10.

3.7.2 Appendix 6A and B presents information on those who lived in the NHS Lothian area who responded online and by paper respectively in respect of whether they were in favour of continued funding or not and according to:

- Council area
- Disability
- Gender
- Private treatment
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Public users of service/NHS staff

3.7.3 They have been kept separate to show the similarities and differences between using online and paper submissions and therefore the importance of providing different methods to enable people to respond to consultations.

Seven Appendices:

1. Consultation document and questionnaire
2. Membership of Lothian Homeopathy Review Group
3. Samples of Website Coverage of the Lothian Homeopathy Review
4. Examples of comments supporting and not supporting continuing funding
5. Public Meetings summary
6. Breakdown of responses - other survey questions including demographics:

   A: online responses and B: paper responses
What is this consultation about?

NHS Lothian is considering whether it should pay for homeopathy services. Your response to this consultation will help NHS Lothian understand the importance of homeopathy to local people.

There is increasing demand for health services and increasing financial pressures in the current economic climate. NHS Lothian also faces the challenge of being the health board with the biggest population growth in Scotland. NHS Lothian is looking at the way it provides all its services, to see if it can provide them more efficiently and whether there are any services that it can reduce or stop in order to protect other priority services.

Some Scottish Health Boards and some NHS areas in England do not provide NHS homeopathy services. Some have decided to stop providing NHS homeopathy services and some are currently paying for these services.

Note: This consultation is about homeopathy and not about herbal remedies.

What is homeopathy?

Homeopathy is based on the principle that ‘like cures like’ – in other words, a substance taken in small amounts will cure the same symptoms it causes if it was taken in large amounts. A homeopath consultation will find out about your lifestyle, eating habits and preferences, temperament, personality, sleep patterns and medical history to help the doctor form a complete picture, which usually takes up to an hour.

(British Homeopathic Association)
– See appendix for more information.

Current homeopathy services in NHS Lothian

NHS Lothian currently provides a small homeopathic service in conjunction with the Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital. There are clinics at Dalkeith Medical Centre and Leith Community Treatment Centre which are hosted and managed by Midlothian Community Health Partnership and a clinic at St John’s Hospital, Livingston, managed by NHS Lothian’s acute services. A small number of people are referred to Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital.
For more information about NHS Lothian homeopathy services please go to the Appendix at the end of this document.

4 Why are we asking for your view on whether we should continue to pay for homeopathy services?

There have been discussions about how homeopathy works, or whether it works, for many years. Some people think that the NHS should not pay for a treatment that has insufficient evidence to support it, in the way that we have for most conventional medicines.

Many clinical trials have been conducted to test whether homeopathic remedies are effective. These studies have generally found that homeopathic remedies perform no better than placebo (a treatment containing no medication) although there have been a few positive results. A number of people who use homeopathy services and homeopathic practitioners say it does help some people and has few side-effects. Homeopathic remedies are generally thought to be harmless as they are extremely diluted preparations.

5 The arguments for and against

It is very difficult to find an overall balanced view of homeopathy, as people tend to be either in favour of it, or against it.

We asked members of our review group to present the case for and against homeopathy. This is what they said:

For

Homeopathy involves giving the patient time. The focus is on the whole person, not just their disease. A remedy is then prescribed that matches both the person and their symptom pattern. The extreme dilution of remedies means that homeopathy is very safe, low cost and free of side effects for adults and children. Patient feedback is generally positive, with patient satisfaction ratings over 90% at the Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital.

The Swiss Health Technology assessment (2006), looked at 22 systematic reviews, and concluded that “there is sufficient evidence for the clinical efficacy of homeopathy, and for its safety and economy, compared with conventional treatment”. This year Switzerland legislated that homeopathy be included in the Swiss National health insurance.

The Lothian homeopathy service costs 0.017% of the total NHS Lothian budget and provides a service which many patients value. NHS Tayside have continued their homeopathic clinic because of cost savings in conventional treatment.

Against

Homeopathic remedies are prepared by serial dilutions of substances in water. After the sequence of dilutions there is effectively none of the original substance remaining. This means that the treatment is, in effect, water devoid
of any active ingredients that could offer a scientific rationale for a clinical effect.
Not surprisingly, there is no substantial evidence to suggest that homeopathic treatments are clinically effective. Those studies cited by proponents are mostly poorly designed, based on small sample sizes and have unreliable outcome measures. While there are patients who are convinced that they ‘respond’ to homeopathy clinical trials show that the response rate is similar to placebo i.e. these are people who would have got better anyway.

It would be wrong for the NHS to use scarce resources paying for unproven homeopathic treatment while, at the same time, unable to afford some proven treatments for serious diseases (e.g. cancer) because they are too expensive

6 What do Lothian GPs say?

GPs in Lothian were asked for their views on homeopathy in June 2012. One hundred and sixty eight replies were received from the 500 GPs. While this only tells us the views of those who replied, most of the GPs who responded questioned the evidence for the effectiveness of homeopathy and did not think NHS Lothian should pay for it. A minority of GPs thought it was of benefit particularly for people with complex conditions and that NHS Lothian should continue to pay.

7 What is the cost of homeopathy to NHS Lothian?

Total homeopathy service costs for NHS Lothian are estimated to be £240,000 a year. This includes staff costs and the associated overhead costs of running clinics, the costs of referrals to Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital and all associated clinic prescribing costs together with GP prescribing. Within these total service costs £53,483 is the fixed costs of buildings and support services and £175,800 is the direct costs of the service, for example staffing, referrals to Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital and drugs.

8 What are the implications?

If NHS Lothian stops paying for referrals to homeopathy services, the small number of people who currently attend homeopathy services may decide to pay for homeopathic treatment from private homeopathic practitioners. They may be able to receive NHS homeopathic remedies from a GP within their local area from one of the small number who prescribe it.

It is not known whether people using Lothian’s homeopathy services continue to see their GP while they attend the homeopathic service. But if the homeopathy services are no longer paid for, some GPs may receive more visits from some of these patients. Also, some GPs who previously referred people to the homeopathy services may instead refer them to NHS specialist services, for example dermatology, gastroenterology and gynaecology. Alternatively, they may not refer them onwards, except where they see a clinical need.
If NHS Lothian continues to pay for homeopathy services the small number of referrals that are mainly made by GPs will continue. Some of these are at the request of patients. As a result of this review greater awareness of the service may result in an increase in the number of referrals.

9 What do you think?

We would like to hear from anyone who wishes to comment. Please answer the questions set out on page 4, which only take two minutes to fill in.

The document is also online at: www.nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk/OurOrganisation/Consultations/Current/Homeopathy where you will find a link to the online questionnaire.

Please pass this document on to anyone you know in Lothian who you think may wish to respond.

You can also contact us in the following ways:

By writing to: Homeopathy Review, NHS Lothian, Waverley Gate, 2-4 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EG

By telephoning: 0131 465 5544

By emailing: homeopathy@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Through social media: twitter – @nhs_lothian facebook – facebook.com/pages/NHS-Lothian

This public consultation finishes on 10 November 2012*, so please let us have your comments by then.

All the questionnaires and comments will be gathered into a report which will be taken to NHS Lothian Service Redesign Committee and Midlothian Community Health Partnership Committee. If you wish to find out what happens please give us your name and contact details, so that we can let you know.

(* N.B The consultation was extended to 10 December 2012)
Homeopathy Review Questionnaire

Should NHS Lothian continue to pay for homeopathy services? What do you think?

1. Please tick one box:
   - NHS Lothian should continue to pay for homeopathy services
   - NHS Lothian should not pay for homeopathy services
   - I am undecided

2. Do you have any other comments about whether NHS Lothian should or should not pay for homeopathy services?

3. Please only answer this question if you have used NHS Lothian homeopathy services otherwise please go to question 4
   On a scale from 0 to 10 with 0 being very poor and 10 being excellent, how do you rate the treatment you received from the service for your condition?
   Please circle only one number
   0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   Very Poor  Excellent

4. I have received private homeopathy treatment  YES  NO

About you
We would like to know a little about you. This will help us to know if we have heard from a wide range of people in Lothian.

5. Which area do you live in?
   - East Lothian
   - Midlothian
   - West Lothian
   - Edinburgh
6. Which describes you best?  
(Please tick all boxes which apply)

- Member of public / user of NHS services
- Member of Public Partnership Forum (PPF) or hospital patient forum/council, patient group of NHS Lothian
- NHS staff
- Councillor, MSP or MP
- A voluntary sector employee
- Health provider (non-NHS)
- Other, please specify, for example if you are replying on behalf of a group:

7. Are you?

Male
Female
Transgender
Prefer not to answer

8. How old are you?  ........ years

9. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? (Include problems related to old age)  Please tick ONE box

Yes, limited a lot
Yes, limited a little
No
Prefer not to answer
10. To which of these ethnic groups do you say you belong?

*Please tick ONE box which best describes your ethnic group*

- White
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British
- African, Caribbean or Black
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to answer

Appendix

**What is homeopathy?**

Homeopathy is a 200-year old system of medicine that seeks to treat patients with highly diluted substances that are administered orally. Homeopathy is based on the principle that you can treat ‘like with like’, that is, a substance which causes symptoms when taken in large doses, can be used in small amounts to treat those same symptoms. It is suggested that homeopathy works by stimulating the body’s self-healing mechanisms. Homeopathic products should not be confused with herbal remedies. Some homeopathic products are derived from herbal active ingredients, but the important distinction is that homeopathic products are extremely diluted and administered according to specific principles. As a result treatment is highly individualised and will vary from patient to patient and also between practitioners.

**Numbers referred to the homeopathy clinics**

The total number of appointments at the three clinics in 2010/11 was 1,573. 87% of all clinic appointments were return visits (follow up appointments), with only 13% as new patient appointments.

NHS Lothian has 126 GP practices, and 23 practices referred patients to the homeopathic clinic in 2010/11. A total of 153 new patients were referred from these named practices in that year. As a broad generalisation, referral activity can be described as mainly concentrated on GP practices relatively close to each of the homeopathy clinics (particularly in Dalkeith/Midlothian and West Lothian), but with some people coming from other parts of the Lothians. There are many reasons why people are referred to homeopathy services and these include treatment for arthritis, dermatitis, menopausal disorder, asthma, migraine, chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome and pain management.
In 2010/11, 145 attendances to NHS Lothian homeopathic clinics were made by people from six other Scottish Health Boards. 86% of these referrals were return appointments. In 2010/11 there were 69 referrals from Lothian to Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital.

**What does the Scottish Government say?**

The Scottish Government recognises that complementary therapies, including homeopathy, may offer relief to some people suffering from a wide variety of conditions; the Scottish Government does not, however, fund complementary therapies directly. It is open to individual NHS Boards to make complementary or alternative therapy services available to their patient populations based on an assessment of needs within their respective areas.

You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats if you ask us. Please contact Interpretation and Translation Service (ITS) on 0131 242 8181 and quote reference number 12-0504. ITS can also give information on community language translations. You can get more copies of this document by calling 0131 465 5544.

(Please note the information in the paragraph above appeared in five community languages in the actual consultation document. They are not able to be reproduced accurately here).
Appendix 2

Membership of Lothian Homeopathy Review Group

Dr Philip Rutledge, Public Health Consultant and Chair of the Homeopathy Stakeholder Review Group

Dr Mike Wilson, Retired GP and helped to establish the Homeopathic Clinic at Dalkeith

Christine Glover, independent Pharmacist and Registered Homeopath

Dr Richard Williams, Chair of Lothian Medical Council

Professor Simon Maxwell, Consultant Physician and Senior Lecturer in Clinical Pharmacology, University of Edinburgh

Sue Edmond, Chair of Midlothian Public Partnership Forum

Patsy Eccles, staff partnership representative

Dr James Cowan, Edinburgh GP

David Small, General Manager East and Midlothian Community Health Partnership (to 1 January 2013)

Professor Alex McMahon, Director of Strategic Planning, Performance Reporting and Information (from 1 January 2013)

Carol Lumsden, Modernisation Manager, East and Midlothian Community Health Partnership

Paul Currie, Strategic Programme Manager (to 12 November 2012)

Alyson Malone, Strategic Programme Manager (from 12 November 2012)

Alexis Burnett, Communications Manager

Sarah Sinclair, Involving People Strategic Lead
Appendix 3

Samples of Press Articles and Website Coverage of the Lothian Homeopathy Review

Links to Consultation:

www.edspace.org.uk/default.asp?page=8&uid=736
www.evoc.org.uk/noticeboard/notices/nhs-lothian-homeopathy-review-consultation
www.midspace.co.uk/default.asp?page=8&uid=455
www.selkirkweekendadvertiser.co.uk/community/letters-to-the-editor/patients-last-chance-to-have-their-say-1-2596441

Pro-Homeopathy:

www.homeopathyheals.me.uk/site/latest-news/2370-homeopathy-review-consultation-extended
www.britishhomeopathic.org/what_you_can_do/campaign_for_homeopathy/current_nhs_funding_challenges.html

Anti-Homeopathy:

www.thetwentyfirstfloor.com/?p=4983
www.dcscience.net/?s=homeopathy
http://edskeptics.org.uk/activism/

News Websites:

www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-19798824
www.express.co.uk/posts/view/206870/NHS-homeopathy-clinic-facing-axe
www.homeopathyheals.me.uk/site/latest-news/1863-midlothian-community-health-partnership-to-look-at-homeopathy-services
www.the-hma.org/news/491-midlothian-community-health-partnership-to-look-at-homeopathy-services-.html -
Appendix 4

Examples of comments from people supporting and not supporting continuing funding

A. Supporting

No or few side effects, in contrast to people’s experience of conventional or allopathic medicines:

• “Over the years we have found homeopathy to be very effective with no side effects whether it was over the counter remedies or more serious conditions requiring medical practitioners. On 3 occasions where the problems were quite serious the homeopathic treatments were successful whereas the conventional treatments had failed. I cannot see these results as having been a placebo response.”
• “Having attended the neurology department at the Western General Hospital prior to being referred to homeopathy the only drug which worked for my migraines has serious side effects (heart problems), whereas homeopathic remedy greatly reduces my migraines and has no long term consequences.”

Personal experience of the benefits and effectiveness of homeopathic remedies:

• “I have received both private and NHS homeopathy treatment for chronic sinusitis and found it most beneficial much more so than orthodox treatment including surgery for both ethmoid and maxillary sinuses. I have come from taking antibiotics for approximately 48 weeks of the year to taking none for over 10 years now.”
• “Homeopathy has provided huge health benefit to me. Prevented hospitalisation, reduced use of inhalers and steroids. Have not been hospitalised for 6 years now…”

Evidence homeopathy works:

• “Placebos have been shown recently to be as effective as drugs in many cases.”
• “Whilst much of the positive evidence for homeopathy is in low quality studies, there are some identified by Shang that are high quality. Homeopathy is notoriously difficult to prove in the conventional medical model of research, but it does seem there is enough out there to validate it being available on the NHS albeit in small amounts and to be periodically assessed.”
• “It is said there is insufficient evidence to say whether homeopathy works. I would say there is and asking those who use it, because they believe it supports treating the cause of the problem not just the symptoms, would make a good study giving useful evidence.”
• “Complementary medicine (homeopathy) should play an integral part in an advanced health system such NHS Lothian and to abandon it in favour of traditional medicine, which is driven by big drugs companies many of which have been proven repeatedly to have falsified their clinical results would be a serious step backwards. Does Lothian really aim to regress rather than progress? Surely 22 systematic reviews in Switzerland cannot all be wrong.”
• “Recent research shows water has memory.”
• “Many NHS doctors are trained homeopaths also who rightly regard homeopathic medicines as a part of their ‘healing’ toolkit. 2. Drugs have many side effects, some unpredictable, depending on the individual, while homeopathy has a proven, safe track-record. This may be important in treating children, or those with a learning disability, for example. 3. Some ailments like irritable bowel-syndrome, dermatitis and eczema, arthritis, and many more can be helped by a more lengthy, patient-focussed consultation rather than spotlighting symptoms. 4. Where waiting lists are long for psychological help for patients whose lack of improvement costs them dear in terms of self-confidence and fear, homeopathy can provide part of a cost-effective service.”

The possibility of increased cost to the NHS if the homeopathic service is withdrawn:

• “If homeopathy taken away from the NHS the number of people attending GP or specialist will probably increase. Patient would then be on different treatment with side effects increasing visits to GP / specialist. I have had fewer visits to my specialist and none to my GP since attending NHS homeopath.”

• “As a GP with a large number of patients every week I strongly support the provision of homeopathic clinics …A lot of patients receiving homeopathic treatment have already been to several specialities, frequently attending GPs or requesting home visits and all these encounters with health professionals are a significant financial burden to the NHS. Out of my own experience some of these patients receiving homoeopathic treatment improved, attended the surgery less frequently/requested less home visits and less referrals to other specialities were required.”

The cost compared to other services provided by NHS Lothian, the low percentage cost compared to the overall NHS Lothian budget and the cost of pharmaceutical drugs:

• “For the little sum of 0.017% of total NHS Lothian budget, Lothian should continue to pay for Homeopathy service.”

• “The costs for homeopathy consultations and treatments on the NHS are, I feel, justified and are relatively small in relation to other services provided across the NHS. Perhaps treatments such as IVF etc which are not actual illnesses, and which are costly to provide could be cut instead.”

• “As NHS Lothian can afford to pay for methadone, contraceptives and abortions they can surely afford to pay for homeopathy.”

• “Should we not be concentrating on the costs of iatrogenesis instead of the negligible amount spent on Homeopathy? Has science really proved all there is to know about health & healing? Why do some people think side-effects of conventional medicines should be preferable to harmless Homeopathy?”

• “The question about the effectiveness of homeopathy will always remain in the absence of any substantive evidence. Surely the question should consider the perceived benefit to those patients who have received treatment from the service; if the overall perception is of benefit, and the numbers of GP attendances, requests for referrals to other services and actual referrals to other services is reduced, then placebo or not, it is of benefit in financial terms of depleting further resources. If there is no significant reduction in requests for further medical interventions, in spite of homeopathic treatment, then there is no overall cost benefit. Given the scale of overall health service expenditure, the sums quoted in this consultation would
suggest that there might be other areas of service inefficiency where these savings could be found.”

The expense for people on low income if the service is withdrawn and they seek private provision:

- “I am not in a position now to afford to pay for private treatment. I have used most of my savings to pay for private consultations. I was a patient in a homeopathic hospital in Glasgow, 1993 then after received NHS treatment. I have a bad reaction to regular medication. I have only had homeopathic treatment since 1993 (no conventional medicines at all)”
- “My daughter has received homeopathic treatment for her skin. We have attended the clinic in Edinburgh and Dalkeith. The treatment has proved very successful and we haven’t been at our GP since her eczema flared up two years ago. If it wasn’t for NHS funding I doubt I would have been able to afford a private practitioner.”

Patient choice:

- “The individual should have a choice of alternative treatments, they can choose to have, therefore it should be paid the NHS. Especially as they have already gone through the traditional treatments which did not help them. The main aim should be to have a few choices to help the patient to be cured as best as possible.”
- “Everyone should be entitled to a choice of healthcare. We pay high tax rates to enable access to a healthcare system that should be consumer-led. Not everyone wants to take pharmaceutical medications.”

Treating the whole person – holistic approach:

- “Homeopathy is holistic and may help flag up indicators to underlying problems that may otherwise be missed in general practice setting. This compliments and improves service to patient. Individuals with complex conditions may see more benefit from homeopathy due to side effects from general practice medicine.”
- “My personal experience is that I was referred to the Homeopathy Clinic by my GP, at her suggestion, during treatment for breast cancer, which has so far included 3 operations, radiotherapy and continuing drug treatment. I found the service very useful indeed, particularly as the approach was to see me and my fairly complex medical history as a whole and to support both me and my body through treatment. Despite the best efforts of the staff at the Western and Royal Infirmary (who were excellent within the scope of their work), they had to concentrate on getting the various procedures done and discussing my current condition; homeopathy recognises that a patient’s whole history and life is relevant.”

The length of the consultation time with the homeopathic doctor as opposed to the time available with a GP:

- “There are not many other treatments available on the NHS using the holistic approach to treating ailments. The fact that a doctor takes time to listen to you when having a homeopathic appointment is therapeutic. This could avoid countless G.P. appointments that give you only a few minutes.”
• “An uninterrupted hour unlike with GP so holistic approach patients use when all else has failed.”
• “The quality of communication and empathy between practitioner and patients seems very significant in the treatment pathway. Whether or not one “believes” in homeopathy, its practitioners spend quality time with their clients and this itself may promote healing and should be financially supported by the NHS.”

Increasing the provision of NHS homeopathy services in Lothian:

• “I think many other people could benefit from homeopathy treatment especially if they suffer from allergies as I do. More people should be made aware that they have the possibility to receive homeopathy treatment on the NHS and that they can request from their GP.”
• “I ask NHS Lothian to allocate 0.02% of their budget to homeopathic services and to make an annual increment of 2% of this amount.”

Reason for NHS homeopathic staff:

• “NHS homoeopathic staff are more easily trusted than private practitioners because more qualified. They also explain when it is more appropriate to use fast acting painkillers or antibiotics or surgery, and when homoeopathy will do more good.”

B. Not supporting

Lack of evidence that homeopathy works:

• “The NHS should not pay for any service which is not based on robust evidence. In straightened (sic) times the NHS needs to demonstrate productivity and efficiency and be seen as an organisation which embraces these approaches. Homeopathy has NO evidence and as a caring organisation the NHS should NOT promote its use. I feel VERY strongly about this - if we have prescribing advisors working hard with GPs to promote evidence based prescribing and to monitor this why is this placebo treatment allowed?”
• “Homeopathy is unproven and unscientific. To continue to pay for sugar pills and water, even if counting as a placebo is a waste of public funds.”
• “The NHS should fund and support evidence based medicine not homeopathy. NHS funding is not infinite and should be used wisely.”
• I am strongly against this as there is no credible scientific evidence that it is anything more than placebo. The Swiss study quoted by proponents has been widely and resoundingly discredited as biased and flawed to the point of being research misconduct.
• “Having tried homeopathy on one or two occasions for eczema, I remain unconvinced that it works or that its science is any good, compared to changes in diet and acupuncture (both of which I have used too and which DID help). I think the money saved not supporting homeopathy would be better spent on investing in those dealing with diet in people or acupuncture or massage, etc.”
• “The NHS should not spend tax payers money on what is plain and simple, water. There is no scientific basis on which to put any reliance on homeopathy. Why, if water can “remember” a drop of some herb after it has been diluted so many times
does it not "remember" all the sewage, cleaning chemicals and other waste that has been in it in the past?"
• "Dozens of scientific studies have shown homeopathy to be nothing more than water. I suggest the NHS try this handy thought experiment I designed for teaching my university class about irrational thinking: Take a quart of petrol and remove a drop. Place that drop in a gallon of tap water and shake vigorously. Now take a drop out of that gallon and add it to another gallon of tap water. Repeat shaking. Now go run your car with it. No one believes this will work, but they believe it will cure arthritis or cancer because they are irrational.”
• "NHS Lothian is struggling as it is financially without wasting money on homeopathic medicine. This is the NHS were we practice researched based medicine. There are very few randomised double blinded controlled studies that would support the use of this therapy.”
• "The 'benefits' of homeopathy can be entirely attributed to the placebo effect and what's more anyone with even the most basic training can set themselves up as a homeopath whilst regular doctors have years of study and practical experience and even then have not fully grasped the complexity of the human body. I am all for patients being given a range of treatment options but the nhs using funds to pay for sugar pills distributed by ill qualified 'professionals' is nothing short of criminal.”
• “The provision of homeopathy by an NHS Board gives it legitimacy in the eyes of patients.”

The placebo effect and ethics:

• “The evidence base clearly demonstrates that homeopathic treatments only work due to the placebo effect. There is no evidence to suggest any active ingredient is present in homeopathic remedies and it is unethical to fund treatments where, not only is there no evidence-base but actually a substantial body of empirical evidence against the treatment, using tax-payers' money.”
• “My understanding is that the balance of evidence on homeopathy clearly shows that it is no more effective than placebo. This is not good enough to merit public funding."  
• “While there is lots of evidence that the placebo effect is real and powerful, I am of the opinion that "lying" to the public (in particular, vulnerable people who are unwell and seeking help) is morally wrong. There are many other ways of making use of the placebo effect that do not revolve around untruths and generally confusing the public.”
• “Continued RCTs (randomized controlled trials) have shown Homoeopathy to be no more effective than a placebo. It is not evidence based medicine. To prescribe knowing this is highly unethical.”
• “The cost of homeopathic treatment may be low; the side effects may be minimal (due to the absence of an active ingredient), and patients may benefit from the 'holistic' approach, and the additional time and attention this affords. But at what cost? Propagating a belief in alternative medicine damages attempts to increase patient (and the general public's) understanding of evidence based medicine and clinical research; it undermines the 'open and honest' relationship which patients should have with their doctors, and it opens up the possibility that homeopathic practitioners could provide misleading or dangerous advice (e.g. disregarding conventional treatments).”
Resources better spent on other services:

- “£240,000 may only be 0.017% of NHS Lothian’s budget, but any ward would be delighted with the staff nurses that would pay for.”
- “£240,000 could likely be more effectively spent and used in diabetes service provision, an area where patient numbers are increasing exponentially. Extra specialist nurses, more clinic hours and more patient education - better awareness and education means improved self-management.”
- “There are important services that are under financial stress in the current economic climate - Wheelchair Services, Community Mental Health Services etc. Homeopathy is diluted water.”
- “If people want to pay for it privately then they can chose to do so but it should not be available on the NHS. Other holistic type approaches e.g. counselling, CBT for psychological issues are available and have been proven to work and these should be funded before homeopathy.”
- “I think in this economic climate monies would be much better spent on drugs and therapies which have clear evidence of therapeutic effect, i.e. backed up by rigorous testing, pharmacological targets and data.”
- “As there is no evidence base to support this practice, the service should reallocate the funding to other areas such as health inequality, public health.”
- “As someone with a chronic health condition who was denied the latest drug treatment, available in England on the NHS, I do find it particularly unacceptable that funding is available for homeopathy which lacks an evidence base.”
- “Give people more time with GPs and better access to mental health services and you'll likely see the same results, people want to be listened to and sympathised with and that's what a homeopath does.”

Standards of evidence and cost effectiveness:

- “Medicines can only be used in NHS Lothian following a rigorous assessment of their benefits and cost effectiveness. This level of evidence is not available for homeopathy. It is not fair that patients should be denied "conventional" treatments on the NHS if the same standards are not applied to "alternative" treatments. The money would be better spent on allowing healthcare professionals more time to spend with patients as the listening process of a homeopathy service is probably as important as the placebo effect some may obtain from the homeopathic remedies.”
- “The current provision of homeopathy by NHS health boards in Scotland directly goes against the ambitions of the NHS Scotland healthcare quality strategy. This strategy mandates that healthcare should be effective and efficient. Homeopathy fails on both these counts and as such it is ridiculous that this ineffective and inefficient treatment is available free of charge on the NHS and funded by the taxpayer.”
- “I am an East Lothian GP and do not believe the NHS should be funding homeopathy. We are under constant pressure to provide evidence based cost effective treatment and prescribing and put much effort into maintaining our prescribing standards. I feel we should be able to justify the spending of public resources, especially in these times of financial constraint and do not feel the evidence for homeopathy justifies it.”
- “No publicly funded service should pay for homeopathy. It should be subject to the same tests for evidence that any other medical treatment is. If it went through SIGN
(Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network) or NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) it would never get funded.”

- “Homeopathic medicines must be labelled with "Homeopathic medicinal product without approved therapeutic indications" and the label must also state a warning advising the user to consult a doctor if the symptoms persist during the safe use of the product. Homeopathic products do not and cannot make therapeutic claims. Thus it seems a waste of money to pay for medicines for which there is no therapeutic claim and no efficacy has been demonstrated.”

**Holistic approach:**

- “The homeopathic "remedies" are nothing more than tap-water and neither NHS Lothian nor anyone else should pay more for them than for tap-water. However, there is stronger evidence that taking time to understand a patient's situation and needs results in better care for that patient. This aspect of the homeopathy "service" should not be lost, if possible. I would prefer that GPs spent more time listening to the patient and discussing with them the nature and severity of their problem(s) as well as possible causes and mitigating actions the patient can take. Homeopathy has been demonstrated to be ineffective any benefit in NHS service is linked to the long holistic consultation service and not the Homeopathy medicine itself. Resource should be placed in allowing more people to have access to longer appointment instead of funding homeopathy services.”

- “Holistic medicine, i.e. considering mental health, diet, lifestyle etc, is worthwhile, and is sometimes wrapped up with homeopathy. A more holistic approach from NHS Lothian would be worthwhile, but homeopathic treatments are basically just water.”

**Patient choice:**

- “If individuals who believe that water holds a "memory" of solvents it contains want to pay for homeopathic treatment privately, that is of course their choice, but public money should not be spent on something which is no better than placebos.”

- “Patient choice alone is not a sufficient justification for providing a treatment option. Efficacy and cost must also be considered.”

- “It may seem uncomfortable to deny a certain intervention to patients who want it, but healthcare cannot operate under the principle that the customer is always right. Homeopathy is scientifically illiterate nonsense with no evidence for its effectiveness.”
Appendix 5

HOMEOPATHY CONSULTATION – PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meetings were held in October 2012 in each of the four local authority areas in the NHS Lothian Board area, in Musselburgh, East Lothian, in Livingston, West Lothian, in Dalkeith, Midlothian and in the City of Edinburgh.

Different timings were chosen for each meeting to broaden access. The format was the same at each: a brief statement by NHS Lothian staff setting out the background to the consultation and information on services, activity and cost. The meetings were chaired by representatives of patient organisations and attendees were invited to ask questions and make comments. Some people stated that they had submitted their comments/ the questionnaire prior to the meetings, some completed the questionnaire at the meetings and others stated they would be submitting their comments/ questionnaire.

At the Edinburgh meeting the British Homeopathic Association asked the meeting chair for an opportunity to make a statement. This was permitted. As no one was present to provide an alternative viewpoint, this meant only a pro-homeopathy presentation was given.

The issues/ comments made at each of the meetings were noted and were similar, but are separately summarised below. A few people attended more than one meeting.

East Lothian

The Musselburgh meeting was held on 4th October in Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre. The issues raised by the 13 members of the public present were.

- NHS Homeopathy service is not publicised, so will have affected the numbers attending together with GPs not being keen to refer. There was also support for an integrated alternative therapy service, together with more homeopathy clinics being available.

- Questioning the cost of other NHS services and how effective they are in comparison, e.g. podiatry. The cost of negligence claims which are very large in comparison to the cost of NHS homeopathy service.

- Personal testimonies as to the benefits of homeopathy treatment, which included statements about the ineffective treatment by conventional medicine and the harmful side effects of such medicine.

- The benefit of NHS homeopathy service because it is provided by qualified homeopaths, which is not always the case in private clinics and therefore the inherent dangers if the service is withdrawn.

- Disadvantaging people who cannot afford to go privately if service is withdrawn.
• Acknowledging that homeopathy does not stand up to random clinical trials, which is all the medical community recognises, but the head of the Glasgow Homoeopathic Hospital while a sceptic at first accepted it did work.

• Time with the homeopath compared with GP and the holistic approach that is undertaken together with continuity.

• Not enough evidence. There are anecdotal comments and some studies but they are very small numbers in any reports. The active ingredient seems to be counselling.

West Lothian

The Livingston meeting was held on 9th October in Howden Park Centre. The issues raised by the 7 members of the public present were.

• What will be the cost if the service is withdrawn – the cost of this service is minuscule, while there is waste in other NHS services (e.g. GP missed appointments), comparison made with non-executive directors' pay and the cost of medicine wastage.

• Several people gave personal testimonies as to the benefits of homeopathy treatment, which included statements about the ineffective treatment by conventional medicine and the harmful side effects of such medicine.

• Patient choice even if it is a placebo.

• Time with the homeopath compared with GP and the holistic approach that is undertaken.

• The influence of drug companies on GP prescribing despite not being properly researched.

• If service ceases most GPs will not be able to prescribe, so what will people do who have benefited?

• Consider option to reduce service to one location.

• Research why people benefit from the service before considering whether to close.

Midlothian

The Dalkeith meeting was held on 10th October in Dalkeith Arts Centre. The issues raised by the 16 members of the public present were.

• Personal testimonies as to the benefits of homeopathy treatment, which included statements about how conventional medicine had failed; but also a comment about the place for both.
• NHS Homeopathy service is not publicised, so will have affected the numbers attending together with GPs not being keen to refer and it not being on sci-gateway (NHS Scotland’s national system for sending documents such as referrals electronically).

• The cost of the service stated in the consultation document questioned in contrast to the costs in 2008, which were only £84,000.

• GP who refers because it is of benefit to some people when everything else has been tried – it being about what is of benefit and cost effective

• If it is effective as stated by number of people present, so should be paid for.

• Costs compared to other services and whether they should be funded, e.g. methadone. Questioning what will be the cost if the service ceases.

• It works on animals

• The Swiss government has approved

• Should be the same evidence process as for NHS drugs and being paid for by the NHS is seen to endorse something which has no scientific evidence to support it.

• It does not have side effects because there is nothing in it.

• Keeping homeopathy within the NHS provides some medical control

City of Edinburgh

The final meeting in Edinburgh was held on 29th October, in NHS Lothian Headquarters at Waverley Gate. The issues raised by the 45 members of the public present were:

• Personal testimonies, some members of the public spoke passionately supporting the benefits of homeopathy treatment, which included statements about the ineffective treatment by conventional medicine and the harmful side effects of such medicine. One member of the public stated they had tried homeopathy treatment but this had not been effective.

• NHS Homeopathy service is not publicised, so will have affected the numbers attending and it not being on sci-gateway has affected referrals.

• GP comment that if homeopathy service not available would cost a lot more in referrals to specialist services. Also some examples given by people present of number of attendances at GP / hospital prior to using homeopathy. The cost of continuing the clinics is negligible as there are small numbers. Homeopathy being singled out - why not free spectacles.

• Studies in other countries showing that homeopathy works.

• Patient choice and therefore should be available on the NHS as pay taxes.
• If service ceases, GPs will not be able to prescribe, as very few are trained. Equity if the service closes, which will increase inequality.

• Consultation process not following legislation, question about who has received information about the consultation and need for extension.

• The wastage in conventional medicine, where pills are thrown away if not used, whereas homeopathy pills can be stopped and then restarted, so there is not wastage.

• Pharmaceutical companies are only required to publish the positive results and not how they interact with each other e.g. insulin and statins.

• The outcome of the consultation should be about fairness and delivery of a patient centred service and not ideology.
Appendix 6  Breakdown of responses to other survey questions

Rating of NHS Lothian Homeopathy Services

In response to:

Q3  Please only answer this question if you have used NHS Lothian homeopathy services, otherwise please go to question 4. On a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent, how do you rate the treatment you received from the service for your condition?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate Scale</th>
<th>Lothian online</th>
<th>Lothian paper</th>
<th>Total Lothian</th>
<th>All online</th>
<th>All paper</th>
<th>Total All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

402 people from Lothian and a further 37 from outside Lothian answered this question: of the 402 Lothian residents, 89% had rated the service 7 or above, with 55% rating it 10.
Appendix 6 continued

A. DEMOGRAPHICS - THE ONLINE SURVEY (Lothian only)

1. Local Authority areas in NHS Lothian

![Bar chart showing responses to the question: Should NHS Lothian continue to pay for homeopathy services? What do you think?]

2. Long Standing Health Problem or Disability

![Bar chart showing responses to the question: Should NHS Lothian continue to pay for homeopathy services? What do you think?]
Gender

Individuals receiving, or who have received, private homeopathic treatment
Age - 30 to 69 - please note - first 5 age ranges in this table minus over 70

Age 30 + to 70+ - please note - last 5 age ranges minus under 30 age range.
Should NHS Lothian continue to pay for homeopathy services?
What do you think?

- White
- Mixed or multiple ethnic group
- Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British
- African, Caribbean or Black
- Other ethnic group

NHS Lothian should continue to pay for homeopathy services
NHS Lothian should not pay for homeopathy services
I am undecided
Public / user of NHS services (able to tick all boxes which applied to this question)

NHS staff (able to tick all boxes which applied to this question)
Appendix 6 continued.

B. DEMOGRAPHICS - THE PAPER RESPONSES (Lothian only)

1. Local Authority areas in NHS Lothian

2. Long Standing Health Problem or Disability

Gender
Individuals receiving, or who have received, private homeopathic treatment
Age - 30 to 69 - please note - first 5 age ranges in this table minus +70

Age 30+ to 70+ - please note - last 5 age ranges minus - 30 age range
Should NHS Lothian continue to pay for homeopathy services?
What do you think?

- White
- Mixed or multiple ethnic group
- Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British
- African, Caribbean or Black
- Other ethnic group
Public / users of NHS services (able to tick all boxes which applied to this question)

NHS staff (able to tick all boxes that applied to this question)
Appendix 7

NHS LOTHIAN HOMEOPATHY PROVISION

There are three NHS Lothian funded clinics in Dalkeith Medical Centre, in Leith Community Treatment Centre and in St John’s Hospital. NHS Lothian patients also attend the outpatient clinic in Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital.

There are 10 clinic sessions per week across the three settings with up to 64 patient slots available.

Information relating to clinical activity is summarised in the data and graphs outlined below.

Outpatient Attendances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalkeith</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leith</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJH</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>1816</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New to Return Ratio : Homeopathy Outpatient Attendances by Year and Site April 2006 to March 2011
Sex Ratio: Percentage split of males and females attending homeopathy outpatient appointments: April 2010 - March 2011

Male: 21%
Female: 79%

The chart above shows the proportions of male to female homeopathy outpatient attendances. In total, there were 1,250 female outpatient appointments compared to just 525 males attending a homeopathy outpatient appointment.

Age and Sex: Total number of Homeopathy outpatient appointments (new and return) by age and sex: April 2010 - March 2011

This chart shows the age and sex split of homeopathy outpatient appointments. All age groups had a higher proportion of female attendances with the exception of children aged under 10 and adults aged 75 - 84.

The 30 - 69 age range generated the most homeopathy outpatient appointments resulting in 71% of the total homeopathy outpatient appointments.
### Number of Homeopathy outpatient attendances (new and return) in NHS Lothian for non-NHS Lothian residents, year ending March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NHS Board of residence</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12 (to date)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHS Borders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHS D&amp;G</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Fife</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>33</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHS GG&amp;C</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHS Highland</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHS Tayside</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Notes

Includes consultant led and nurse led clinics

Data extracted January 2012

Data for 2011/12 is incomplete

Source: ISD ACaDMe outpatients (SMR00)
Referral activity from NHS Lothian to Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital

Out of area specialist referrals are made from NHS Lothian clinics to the specialist Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital (part of Western General Hospital / Gartnavel). Referral activity over recent years is outlined below.

### Number of Homeopathy outpatient attendances (new and return) in NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde for NHS Lothian residents, year ending March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12 (to date)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Infirmary/Gartnavel</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>119</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Infirmary/Gartnavel</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
Includes consultant led and nurse led clinics
Data extracted January 2012
Data for 2011/12 is incomplete

Source: ISD ACaDMe outpatients (SMR00)
The referral pattern to homeopathic clinics from NHS Lothian GP practices can be identified and is illustrated below.

**GP Practice Referrals: Rate of Homeopathy outpatient referrals in NHS Lothian per 1,000 registered patients by GP practice: April 2010 - March 2011**

![Map showing referral rates to homeopathic clinics from different GP practices.](image)

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GP Practice</th>
<th>Population Sept 2010</th>
<th>Number of patients 2009/10</th>
<th>Number of patients 2010/11</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000 patients 2009/10</th>
<th>Rate per 1,000 patients 2010/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KINGSGATE MEDICAL PRACTICE</td>
<td>7,900</td>
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<td>MURRAYFIELD MEDICAL CENTRE</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>DALKEITH MEDICAL PRACTICE</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>DR I TAYLOR &amp; PARTNERS</td>
<td>10,460</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE WOOD MEDICAL PRACTICE</td>
<td>7,732</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>THE GREEN PRACTICE</td>
<td>7,976</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>THE GROUP PRACTICE - EYRE</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>DR GUNN &amp; PARTNERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE CRAIGSHILL PARTNERSHIP</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEITH MOUNT SURGERY</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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<td>DEDDINGE MEDICAL GROUP</td>
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<td>LINLITHgow GROUP MEDICAL PRACTICE</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOANHEAD PRACTICE, Sutherland House</td>
<td>4,424</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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