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| **Aurora New Dawn** | 14th June 2013 |

**Re: Prevent G4S from running sexual assault referral centres in the Midlands**

Thank you for highlighting your concerns about the service above via a petition on the change.org website.

NHS England takes complaints about any of its services or those services it commissions very seriously and following an investigation I am now able to provide you with a full and final response to the concerns raised.

NHS England have recently taken over the former PCT’s commissioning responsibilities for Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and are now engaged in commissioning with the police service until there is a legal change transferring police healthcare elements  to NHS England.  At that point NHS England will become the lead commissioners for the service.

One of the advantages of NHS England becoming involved in commissioning of these services is that they have been able to review current arrangements and provide oversight particularly around clinical governance .NHS England will shortly be publishing a Sexual Assault Services “Securing Excellence” document.   Accordingly, where contracts for services have been let to third party providers, there are robust mechanisms in place to ensure a quality service is delivered described in more detail below.

There are many areas of good practice, the Single Operating Framework for commissioning and NHS Standard Contract will now allow a consistent approach to ensure improvement for services that have not been as robust historically for example Paediatric Provision.  This will be integral to inform commissioning intentions for 2014.

In response to the questionnaire which relates in particular to the Midlands, NHS England can confirm contracts for health services within SARCs across the Midlands have been awarded following an open application process.

This involves contract opportunities being advertised nationally through Supply2Health which provides an opportunity for any provider of services (NHS, private or voluntary/third sector) to express an interest.  Interested parties then go through a pre-qualifying assessment stage to assess their capability and capacity to deliver the service in question before being invited to bid.  This assessment process includes the bidder’s experience and expertise in the area being advertised.

Bids are assessed by a panel of independent stakeholders against a range of criteria, including service delivery, quality and value for money. The bidder with the highest score is recommended for approval as the preferred provider.

Where private companies have been awarded SARC contracts it has been following such a selection process, which will have been undertaken in accordance with recognised procurement rules. The contract will have been awarded because the company was assessed as submitting the best application which demonstrated their ability to meet the service specification. The NHS is not permitted to exclude bidders purely on the basis that they are a private organisation.

Once contracts are awarded they are subject to regular quality and performance management reviews to ensure that care is being delivered that meets service users and NHS England expectations, with appropriate action being taken as required through the contract terms.

 The SARC contracts that NHS England award do not cover the whole of the service available to victims of sexual assault and are complimented by a variety of other voluntary and statutory services.

Ultimately, the process is about ensuring a sustainable and supportive environment for victims. We are always ready to listen to any particular concerns about an individual SARCs response to the need of a victim so that we can continue to ensure the provision of a good service.

I hope this response has answered the questions raised. If you have any further questions, or would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact us on 03003 11 22 33 or by emailing [england.contactus@nhs.net](mailto:england.contactus@nhs.net). Please quote reference **Petition -** **Prevent G4S from running sexual assault referral centres in the Midlands** in any correspondence and communication.

Yours sincerely

**Janet White**

**Head of Customer Contacts**

**NHS England Customer Contact Centre**