

‘Cosmetic Surgery Should Not Be Paid for by the NHS’ CCEA – Transcript

I'm Kerri, and I'm a pensioner awaiting surgery.

I'm Roisin and I have a visible tattoo on my neck.

I am Niamh, and I'm an NHS doctor.

I'm Emma, and I'm a taxpayer.

I'm Aine and I'm a cosmetic surgeon.

I am Niamh and I'm an obese adult.

Tonight we are going to discuss that cosmetic surgery should not be paid for by the National Health Service. Only basic and essential health needs should be paid for by the government. Kerri, being a pensioner awaiting surgery, what do you think?

I think that cosmetic surgery should not be paid for by NHS, because being honest, it's a want not a need. I've got a worn out joint in my right shoulder, and it's been gradually getting worse over time. And it's got to the point where I sadly cannot do anything in my daily routine. And I will need a carer very soon.

I'd like to jump in there, Kerri, I'd like to tell my story. I was very young and I was very vulnerable and I did fall for a boy who I shouldn't have fell for. And he got me into drugs and alcohol, but I came out of that shell. And during that relationship we got matching tattoos on our necks. And I just want it removed, I can't do anything with it on my neck. I feel as if everybody is looking at me and I'm very anxious when I go anywhere. I don't have a job because no one, I don't think, will take me because of it. I'm on very strong antidepressants, and I just want this removed, and I hope that the NHS could remove it for me.

I can relate to you on the antidepressants, I'm also on very strong antidepressants. I am awaiting a gastric band on the NHS waiting list. And I feel that I should be responded to as a quicker and more mature response. Because as a previous taxpayer and hard worker, I am being dealt with, I'm being put aside and not being dealt with at all. And I'm being told like, "Just wait your turn." And it's going to take for ages and I can relate to Roisin because I am in a bad mental state at the moment.

May I jump in there? I also paid tax every day of my life, to the day up to I retired. I have been also pushed aside and I am still waiting for this surgery. This has got so bad and I don't see why you two should both be put in front of me. Because clearly, well, like I said to Aine, you are looking at a want, not a need.

With the utmost respect, when I was training to be a doctor, I was not training to give you a gastric band, or to take a tattoo off your neck, I was training to save peoples' lives.

As a cosmetic surgeon, I would happily do your procedures, both of you, with monthly instalments, like a payment plan which allows you to pay it off if you don't have the money at the moment. And I will change your lives forever.

But as Niamh said, we have no jobs, like we can't really pay for... To get ours removed and stuff, to get my tattoo removed at least.

Yeah. But as I said, a payment plan which is the amount of time that it takes for your tattoo removal, by the time you'll have a job and it's literally a pound a day, which is a cup of coffee, just to get your tattoo removed, a pound a day.

Can I also add, if you did perhaps go to a cosmetic surgeon, they can guarantee that you end up with no scar on your neck. I cannot guarantee that as an NHS doctor, because I am not as fully qualified as a cosmetic surgeon.

Listening to Kerri, Roisin and Niamh's reasons to get the cosmetic surgery paid for by the National Health Service, I can only see one good reason why it shouldn't be. You, Niamh and Roisin, I really don't think it should be paid for by the National Health Service. Like I'm sorry that you're on really strong antidepressants, but it's not the National Health Service's job for your mental health.

Can I just suggest that maybe if you both are on antidepressants, can I recommend a counsellor?

Well, this is the thing that, I don't know about you Roisin, but I wasn't recommended, when I first went to the doctor's, I was in no good fit state. And a doctor should know who to recommend and maybe a consultant or somebody who knows, you know, a therapist so I can talk to somebody, but they didn't do that. And I felt that you were the people I could only rely on. As I have no parents to actually maybe give me some money to help me get back on my feet.

But can I ask how you got in this situation, if you don't... Well, when I was younger I was quite heavy boned. So during school people would, you know, call me names, and it just got so bad. And I felt like I needed to get out of it, but I couldn't. I just kept stress eating and to the point where I was actually bedridden. I didn't want to go anywhere, I was depressed. And now that I'm getting older, my cholesterol is through the roof. And I simply just can't do anything with my life at the moment without anybody to rely on.

So I heard that you say you're bedridden, but the pensioner, she has a worn out joint. And every time she moves her right shoulder or right arm, she can't even dress herself, because I've known from experience, my own relative has had a worn out joint. And like, yes, you can live with it, but you will be in pain every day of your life. But the procedure you'll have to go through to get a new shoulder will cost the NHS a lot of money, that would probably be spent on your gastric band or your tattoo removal, even though those aren't really, like are you in any physical pain? Not being cheeky.

No, not physically, but mentally my mind is just everywhere because of how I feel.

And like Niamh said, would you not be safer going to a counsellor instead of an NHS doctor?

But it's like Niamh said, we weren't given very good advice on where to go to and like what to do.

Did you state, whenever you went in about your tattoo removal, about your mental health? Because usually like if you went in to get a tattoo removal, it would be all eyes on the tattoo. Did you mention your mental health? Maybe if you made that like, maybe you like whispered it or even said it a wee bit. But if you kept pushing at the doctor your mental health would have been dealt with before your tattoo, like not being cheeky, but.

But already it would have been on my records about the antidepressants that I'm on with my doc... you know, the records you have at the doctors it already would have been on it.

Can I just say, Roisin, you don't have a medical excuse to come to an NHS doctor, and neither do you, yes, you're obese, but that is not a medical reason. Like I can see a pensioner here, that's in physical pain constantly. And that is a medical reason that needs attended to. Sorry, with respect, I'd like to say that I could at any week or month, my heart could just, you know, could fail. And my blood flow is

getting blocked by all this fat and my cholesterol, my arteries. And you're going to leave it to the point where I am actually...

Can I jump in there? For you to get a gastric band, no matter who you go to, whether it be a cosmetic surgeon or an NHS doctor, you're obviously, you're going to have to lose weight before you can fit the criteria for this gastric band. So instead of waiting and waiting, why don't you start doing?

And may I add, it might be all in your head. You might think in your head that I need this gastric band to lose weight, then I can get a job, then I can do this. But you never know, you could start exercising and start dieting now, and then by the time you get that gastric, you wouldn't need that gastric band.

But how can I? I haven't been offered a carer or anything. I can't, like physically I can't move that much. Well, you ate yourself into this problem.

Well, in my opinion, if she was being bullied and such and such, like being tormented in school, I do feel really sorry for you, I would hate for that to happen to me or anyone I know. And I do, I feel like you really need this to change your life. The same with you and your tattoo removal. But I just see it as time wasting for the NHS, I say, like as, Aine, you were saying, the tattoo removal, it's a three year process and it's a pound a day. And I'm pretty sure, like, do you have a mummy or daddy?

Everyone has just abandoned me, I'm by myself because they think, and they think that's the way I am now. You know, previously to the boyfriend I had, they think that is the path I've chose, you know, with the drugs and the alcohol, they think that is the way I am now. So I don't really have anybody.

Would you not be able to, like you've persuaded me that you've changed your life over. Why can't you persuade them?

Because they just won't listen, they don't want anything to do with me. They're afraid of like previous things I have been in, you know, with gangs and stuff like that. That all this trouble will come to them, and of course I don't want trouble coming to obviously my family.

Roisin, can I ask? How do you survive on a day-to-day basis if you say you have no money and you have no job?

Just with benefits and stuff, that's the only thing I'm on.

But at least you can do the pound a day payment. And then you can go out looking for a job and then you can pay it off instead of...

Can I also add, you said that no one will employ you, that's actually discrimination. No one is allowed to not employ you just because you have a tattoo on your neck. That is discrimination, you could actually sue them for that if you really wanted to. So I don't think that's a good enough excuse. I think if you really wanted to, if you really tried to get a job, you would get a job. And you'd be able to afford one pound a day to get cosmetic surgery.

But I have went in and I have tried getting jobs, but it's the fact of the tattoo on my neck. I can't cover it up with make-up, with lots of make-up, because, you know, you can't go in a job with lots of make-up on and as well as scarves.

And also, but like you could try like persuade them that like you are a good enough worker. But the only thing you'll need is a scarf to wrap this tattoo up. And just let them know that you will get this removed, just you need a bit of money.

Can I ask, have the employers, the interviewers that you went to, said to you physically, verbally, that they're not employing you because of your tattoo, or is it all just in your head?

It seems like you are all ganging up on Roisin. But if your shoulder, I am sorry, but if it was such an urgent need, why hasn't it, like I know if I fell and I like proper like broke a rib or, you know, I broke something that would leave me unable to do anything, they'd take me in, do the surgery quick as possible. I just don't think yours is such an urgent need, I know it's a need, but not an urgent one.

Because I haven't got the surgery yet, is because people who are looking to get a gastric band, and a tattoo removal are put in front of me, which isn't right. I have been paying taxes all my life and I have just retired. And like I should be a top priority.

But as Niamh said, she was also a taxpayer, so should that not apply for her as well, even though it's just a gastric band and it is a need, you know, it is a want? But she's worked and she's put money towards.

She can also go to a cosmetic surgeon, I can't, a cosmetic surgeon can't do what I need. I can only go to an NHS doctor, she can have a choice of two options.

But can I also add? You implied that the NHS doctors are leaving it too long to help you. It's not the NHS doctors that you are the way you are, you've done this to yourself. And I do feel sorry for what happened to you as a child. But you cannot blame the NHS doctors for not attending to you straightaway. The NHS doctors work for the NHS, we are not the NHS. Yes, sorry for interrupting, but a person who has a cancer or a tumour walks in, and they're telling you that they have... they're feeling this way, they have the symptoms. Do you tell them that maybe this is genetic, this is their fault, this has been done upon you from previous generations? No, because my parents, they were obese and I have got this genetically, I was heavy boned as a child. And like Kerri, she can actually get up and move around. She has her legs, or I don't know, maybe in a good state, but you have one sore shoulder.

One sore shoulder, that means I can't sleep at night, I can't sleep, I can't get dressed. I have to get my husband to help me do everything.

Well, ROISIN, I'm sure you agree that we aren't getting enough motivation. We aren't being told that, go out there, you can do this, do it now.

Yeah, I agree with Niamh though, we aren't getting the support that we need from the, say our GPs or our local doctors. So the only place we can, think we can turn to is the NHS. And they're not giving us the support either. And as Aine, said earlier on, how long have you been waiting for your shoulder surgery?

It would be a couple of months.

A couple of months, but then why aren't you top priority then?

Because people like you and Niamh are above me for silly procedures.

But for like in respect of all of you, it's sort of rude to call them silly procedures. I know they're not, like they're not the best procedures, like who, like tattoo you did yourself. I'm sorry, you know you did to yourself. The same with you, I know you did to yourself, but like not being cheeky or nothing, but you can't just like ... I think you are all...

Would you rather go to somebody that you know will be the same person over and over again? Because if you go to the NHS you will not be guaranteed that you will have the same person doing your procedure, for the couple of years that it will take to do this gastric band and really help it. Because if you come to me, I will literally have as if nothing was there, nothing happened. You will be so slim and like no scarring or nothing.

May I just add, sorry, that you didn't mention that if you have like an underactive thyroid problem, or if like you have some syndrome that makes you can't stop feeding or not make you full.

She is full boned.

Exactly, but that shouldn't be in your excuse.

But a lot of people are big boned but aren't obese, like you can control it, you can eat properly. You can do more exercise, like you are not born obese, you've done this to yourself. And can I also add that, Emma, you were saying that these aren't silly procedures. I was trained to be a doctor, and this is not what I want to do, I want to save lives. And comparing these procedures to maybe Kerri's procedure, believe me, is silly. And you're also complaining that you have to pay taxes. But if Kerri ends up having to get a cure, that's going to eat up even more of your taxes.

You see, I won't even, like you want to save lives, yours isn't life threatening. You can live with it, like yes, in pain but like the likes of cancer patients, I know you want to help them. They can die at any moment, they're the type of patients you want to be putting at the top. These are the side patients for like, I'm not being cheeky, but like you aren't going to die. Maybe you might get a heart problem, which is yours is only proper life threatening, like that could happen.

You have no medical condition you know of like now.

Like your health, like maybe you could take your life, but that's a counsellor. And I am so sorry for your shoulder and I'm sorry about your big bones and you being bullied. But you're saying that you save lives, that's not saving a life.

Yes, but it is helping those taxpayers that are complaining with the NHS who were eating up all their money. Well, maybe if we could perform these procedures that need performing, we wouldn't need as many carers. I know that's keeping people in jobs, but you still are complaining about taxes, but you have to pay them through your taxes.

I have no choice. I have no choice, if I don't pay taxes, that is me right to jail. I don't have a choice what my taxes are used for. My taxes are used for roads, the NHS, I have no choice. If I did have a choice, I'd put it all towards saving lives, like I'm not being cheeky, but I would like, if you got a job, it'd be saving lives you'd want to do, not like if you didn't have a tattoo, you wouldn't want people using your money for a tattoo removal.

Sorry, can I interrupt? Just, Kerri, you can actually use your pension to pay for a cosmetic surgeon to fix your shoulder, if you really thought it was that much of a burden.

My pension is to get me and my husband through our last couple of years in this world. And I'm not wasting it on a cosmetic surgeon, because no offence to the cosmetic surgeon, I do like what you're doing, but it's an NHS doctor's job.

Sorry, but if you really thought you could live up... live your life up to the fullest, then why wouldn't you go to a cosmetic surgeon, get your shoulder fixed, have a good life after and then...Sorry, can I just interrupt? I'm just going to conclude this on asking, can you all tell me your opinion on should it be paid for or should it not be paid for? Aine.

I don't think it should be paid for by the NHS.

Why?

Because as the NHS doctor, Niamh has said, that it is for life threatening procedures, unlike Roisin and Niamh's, I can do it.

Niamh, what is your opinion?

Yes, I do feel I should be paid for, and because I was a previous taxpayer and this isn't the way I should be repaid.

Kerri, what is your opinion?

No, I don't think it should be paid because like I've said, people who need cosmetic surgery, it's a want, not a need.

Roisin, what is your opinion?

I think it should be paid because it is a National Health Service, national as in helping everybody.

I don't think it should be paid for because as a doctor I am trained to save lives, not do silly procedures.

As a taxpayer I don't think it should be paid for. I want my money going towards saving lives, not like changing lives,

that is what a cosmetic surgeon is for.