

NHS 24
BOARD MEETING
27 FEBRUARY 2025
ITEM NO 9.5
FOR ASSURANCE

STAKEHOLDER ROLE IN GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE

Executive Sponsor:

Steph Phillips, Director of Transformation, Strategy, Planning & Performance

Lead Officer/Author:

Arlene Campbell, Head of Stakeholder Engagement and Insights

Action Required:

The NHS 24 Board is asked to:

- Note the content of this paper capturing the output of a 'deep dive' exercise on the role of stakeholders in governance and assurance, undertaken at NHS 24 Board Workshop, September 2024.
- Note the next steps, as set out within the paper.

Key Points for the Board to consider:

- Stakeholder engagement is one of the five primary functions of governance as set out within the Blueprint for Good Governance.
- NHS 24 Board has an agreed Governance Improvement Plan in place with the intention of advancing actions identified through self-assessment against the 'Blueprint'. This paper focuses on Action 6 relating to integrated governance system and operating system.

Governance process:

This paper will be shared for Board assurance on 27 February 2025 as agreed by Board Chair, Dr Martin Cheyne, and the Action 6 Lead and Good Governance Champion, Martin Togneri.

Strategic alignment and link to overarching NHS Scotland priorities and strategies:

Scottish Government Blueprint for Good Governance – guidance on how to deliver and sustain good governance in healthcare.

Strategic alignment and link to Corporate Delivery Plan activity:

Robust governance aligned with the 'Blueprint' is woven through NHS 24's Corporate Delivery Plan, aligned with both the agreed delivery activities and Risk Management.

Key Risks:

No key risks identified. The progress with the Board Governance Improvement Plan enables the organisation to demonstrate the steps it has taken to examine and embed 'Blueprint' guidance, set out aligned with all aspects of corporate governance.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications identified relating to the content of this paper.

Equality and Diversity:

No direct impact on equality and diversity. However, NHS 24 will continue to monitor and assure specific activity to deliver responsibilities and duties, particularly aligned with stakeholder engagement.

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 The NHS 24 Board is asked to:

- note the content of this paper capturing the output of a 'deep dive' exercise on the role of stakeholders in governance and assurance, undertaken at NHS 24 Board Workshop in September 2024.
- To note next steps, as set out within paper.

2. TIMING

2.1 NHS 24 Board continues to progress actions across its agreed Governance Improvement Plan 2024/25. This paper reflects the output of the deep dive discussion in relation to action 6 which took place at the end September 2024 and will report to NHS 24 Board February 2025.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 NHS 24 Board have committed, as part of an agreed Governance Improvement Plan, to examine the role of stakeholders in NHS 24 governance and assurance, with a particular lens on what this might look like in extending boundaries for same, outside of NHS 24.

3.2 [The Blueprint for Good Governance in NHS Scotland](#) sets out guidance customised for public sector healthcare bodies, on how to deliver and sustain good corporate governance.

3.3 It states that “**Governance** is the means by which NHS Boards direct and control the healthcare system to deliver Scottish Government policies and strategies and ensure the long-term success of the organisation....”

3.4 Good governance requires an **assurance** framework that aligns strategic planning and change implementation with the organisation’s purpose, aims, values, corporate objectives and operational priorities.

3.5 There is an emphasis within the guidance on the *collaborative approach* to good governance, and engaging with stakeholders is set one as one of the five primary functions of governance within the Blueprint.

Assessment

3.6 A dedicated session was held at the September 2024 Board Development Workshop to consider the improvement action aligned with examining and clarifying the role of stakeholders in governance and assurance. It was

recognised that to deliver good governance NHS Boards need to respect and pursue the rights and interests of all stakeholders, but what does this mean in the context of NHS 24 governance and assurance?

- 3.7 **Language and definitions** are critical. Board members discussed and agreed on the distinction between governance and assurance – aligned with the definitions set out within the blueprint and then went on to agree the importance of ‘roles’ versus ‘responsibilities’
- 3.8 It was agreed that the Board has overall **responsibility** for corporate governance, determining the rules and controls for the organisation, whilst at the same time ensuring stakeholder interests are in alignment. The responsibility of Scottish Government, as a principal stakeholder, was also reflected as being an important part of corporate governance, in ensuring adherence to relevant laws and regulations and its role in ensuring NHS bodies adhere to standards of governance as ultimately set out in the Blueprint.
- 3.9 It was considered that many stakeholders, internal and external, play an important **role** in corporate governance and assurance i.e. in relation to processes, practices, culture, influencing strategy and planning – all bringing different interests and different levels of impact and influence.
- 3.10 The NHS 24 **Assurance Framework** was referenced as being an important aide memoire in relation to NHS 24 controls, roles and responsibilities.
- 3.11 The Board went on to discuss the suite of already **existing arrangements and mechanisms** in place across NHS 24 which enabled a collaborative and participative approach in assurance, and concurred that these were operating effectively with objectives being achieved i.e. committee structure; strategic programme boards - with external stakeholder involvement; collaboration boards (i.e. SAS/NHS 24); established volunteering structures through PPF and Youth Forum, programme assurance groups and identified stakeholder engagement programmes, networks and relationships.

Recommendations

- 3.12 Whilst the Board felt it had reached an agreed position in relation to the role of stakeholders in governance and assurance, and were content in its broad review of existing arrangements, it was recognised that there may be opportunities to strengthen current practice and recommended:
 - 3.12.1 Considering how best to further enable stakeholders to enquire, influence and comment upon areas of corporate governance.
 - 3.12.2 Reviewing NHS 24 annual reporting and potentially progressing a stakeholder focused exercise evaluating the effectiveness of the Annual Report.
 - 3.12.3 Production of a Stakeholder Engagement Annual Report

3.12.4 Considering opportunities for greater Board engagement/visibility with stakeholders.

4. ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Initial output from the session has been shared with session lead and action owner, Martin Togneri, with agreement of Board Chair to report output back to NHS 24 Board, 27 February 2025.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 No financial implications identified at this stage.

6. MEASURABLE BENEFITS

6.1 Effective corporate governance will foster accountability and provide reassurance to, and opportunities for involvement and collaborative working with stakeholders, both internally and externally.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 The NHS 24 Board is asked to consider for assurance the output of the session and aligned recommendations.

7.2 The Head of Stakeholder Engagement and Insights will continue to work with and support NHS 24 Board in progressing the improvement actions aligned with action 6 of the Board Governance Improvement Plan.