

14 July 2025

Richard Leonard MSP
Convener
Public Audit Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Convener

NHS in Scotland: Spotlight on Governance

During the evidence session on 11 June 2025 regarding the above report we committed to clarifying in writing the following points:

Examples of collaborative working across boards

The operation of National Treatment Centres (NTCs) is an example of planned care being delivered across boards on a collaborative basis. The recently published Scottish Government [Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework](#) notes that the 5 current NTCs operate according to the population planning principle in supporting regional working across territorial health boards. They provide extra capacity for planned inpatient care, day case treatment and diagnostic services.

The Committee may wish to seek further examples of collaborative working when it takes evidence from the Scottish Government.

Aspiring chairs programme – participant recruitment

We sought further information from NHS Education for Scotland on the Aspiring Chairs programme. They confirmed that participants in the Aspiring Chairs programme for years one and two (2023/24 and 2024/25) were drawn from the pool of existing NHS non-executive board members.

For the current 2025-26 cohort, (year three of the programme), NHS Education for Scotland has trialled opening the programme to other sectors. This has led to non-executives from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service participating in the programme this year. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is also acting as a host board for one of the other Aspiring Chairs. NHS Education for Scotland intend to evaluate this approach at the end of the year and consider the implications for the future programme.

To secure a place on the programme candidates must be nominated by the chair of their current board and are interviewed.

Appointment to Board chair positions - previous board experience

The Scottish Government publish a full list of public appointments made to public bodies, this includes the position and organisation an individual is appointed to, the term and conditions of the appointment.

The Blueprint for good governance sets out that, to support succession planning, NHS Boards are expected to maintain a record of the diversity of skills, experience present in the current board. Any gaps should be reflected in the Board's succession planning and highlighted to the Cabinet Secretary when recruiting new Board members.

The Commissioner for Ethical Standards produces an annual report on public appointments across public bodies. This includes data on the diversity characteristics of appointed Chairs and board members, and performance against diversity targets. The Commissioner also reports on the numbers of applicants who currently/previously held a public appointment. This data relates to all public bodies not just the NHS.

I trust this information is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Boyle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Boyle
Auditor General for Scotland