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Brian Moore,
Board Chair,
The State Hospitals Board for Scotland

Via Email:
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20 December 2023

Dear Brian,

THE STATE HOSPITALS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND ANNUAL REVIEW: 29 NOVEMBER 2023

Thank you for attending The State Hospital Board for Scotland's (TSH) Annual Review with your Vice Chair, Chief Executive and other members of the Executive Team on 29 November 2023. I am writing to express my thanks and to also summarise the key discussion points.

I would like to express my thanks to yourself, your Chief Executive Gary Jenkins and the Executive Team on behalf of Ministers for your maintenance of smooth governance, not only through the pandemic, but also through these reporting years. I want to also thank the staff at TSH for the work they have done in the face of challenges over the last couple of years.

Annual Reviews remain an important part of the accountability process for the NHS. The intention of this Annual Review was to cover the years 2021-23 to 'catch-up' to the current year, whilst also reflecting upon the challenges and successes over the last two years.

GOVERNANCE

I am glad to hear that the board has accepted a hybrid model when it comes to Board meetings, noting that you have members across the country and ensuring that they can be connected wherever they may be. It was also pleasing to note that there is a strong command structure within the service as well as links into local and national groups, providing for robust and consistent governance for TSH. One point I would like to focus on, however, would be the scoring around the NIS audit. Cyber security remains an important focus for Boards and I would like to be kept informed as to your performance going forward. It is noted that considerable improvements have already been made this reporting year.

FINANCE

It is reassuring that over the reporting years TSH have achieved all savings targets; I understand that this has been no easy task considering the pressures on budgets and costs linking to Covid-19. I want to thank you for your continued efforts to reach these targets and your collaboration with Scottish Government finance teams to ensure risks and challenges are reported and supported. I am encouraged to learn that TSH is forecasting breakeven for 2023-24.

TSH's achievement of hitting 100% of sustainability targets set for 2030 and 19% of 2040 targets should be celebrated. It is encouraging that TSH holds the climate and sustainability as a priority and work should continue to ensure the services is both financially and environmentally sustainable. I would be keen to receive updates as to the consideration and introduction of new climate and sustainability initiatives that are developed from TSH; including your research into renewable energy sources and 'futureproofing' the service. Any innovations around these topics should be shared to inform best practice and improvements across NHS Scotland.

WORKFORCE

I understand that staffing has been and continues to be an issue at TSH with challenges due to staff absences and recruitment. It is encouraging that there is a task and finish group dedicated to understanding and seeking solutions to address this. I would like to be kept apprised of the outcomes of this group and would be grateful if findings and actions could be shared with officials.

Additionally, I would be interested to hear about the progress of the social media strategy in attracting new staff and if there are any key themes that are being indicated from the newly implemented exit interviews.

PERFORMANCE

TSH has performed well over the reporting period, completing many programmes of work as set out in Remobilisation and Delivery plans. However, I believe there is still work that can be done in relation to patient physical health and security.

It is disconcerting that such a high percentage of patients at TSH are obese. I recognise that the Supporting Healthy Choices project is underway to help tackle this, nonetheless, the improvement of patient physical health should remain be a key priority for the Board for the years ahead.

Further to the above request regarding performance, you had indicated that the Security project is due to be completed by the first week of April 2024. I am aware that there have been several challenges you have faced in relation to this programme of work that has led to a number of delays in completion. With a completion date in early Q1 2024-25, I would like to be notified when the security project has been completed or of any predicted delays to the estimated completion date. I would also ask that you engage with officials to inform us of any risks and mitigations TSH are taking should another delay be forecast.

I was pleased to hear that daytime confinement is due to cease by January 2024 and note that this was identified in the most recent round of Mental Welfare Commission reports. I would appreciate if you could confirm with officials that this target has been met, especially at such a time where there is increased scrutiny on TSH.

As discussed in the review, I understand that you, (and other forensic mental health services) are awaiting a response to the Forensic Network's Communications and Technology in Secure Mental Health Settings papers. As per our dialogue, I am keen for our response to the recommendations set out in the reports to come early in the New Year and any deviation from that timeline will be communicated to you by officials.

Finally, I want to touch upon patient KPI's that were not discussed in the reviews. I noticed that there were a few targets that TSH did not meet regarding care and treatment plans and patient engagement with psychological therapies throughout both 2021-22 and 2022-23. I would be keen to understand why this is the case and what work TSH are doing to address the non-compliance with these targets over 2021-22. As such, I would be grateful if you could engage with officials in the sponsor team to provide this information. Based on your response, we will determine whether there is a need for further discussion.

RISKS AND LOOK FORWARD

Looking forward, I understand that there are challenges that TSH must face in the coming years as well as the potential landscape for uncertainty and change within the estate with the work that is being taken forward regarding Barron recommendation 1. I am content that TSH has the governance in place to face these challenges, however, I ask that you maintain good dialogue with officials to ensure that focus and assurances are maintained, to guarantee that patients being treated at TSH receive the support and rehabilitation that they need.

CONCLUSION

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the Board, the Chief Executive, the Executive Team and the staff at TSH for their efforts and commitment over the last few years.

Scottish Ministers will want to ensure that there is no room for complacency now as we move into the future. It is important that TSH maintains the level of governance and performance to ensure the challenges that are faced in the coming years are faced and overcome to deliver a service with person-centred patient care at its core.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Gallagher
Director of Mental Health