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Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing  
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Mr Brian Moore  
Board Chair  
The State Hospitals Board for Scotland

Via Email:  
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16 December 2025

Dear Brian,

## **THE STATE HOSPITALS BOARD FOR SCOTLAND ANNUAL REVIEW: 24 NOVEMBER 2025**

Thank you for attending The State Hospitals Board for Scotland (TSH) Annual Review with your Chief Executive and other members of the Board on 24 November 2025. I am writing to express my sincere thanks and to summarise key discussion points from the Annual Review.

I would first like to convey my appreciation and thanks to every member of staff that I met on 24 November; I can see that they are highly dedicated and diligent in regard to their work, maintaining a high standard of care despite the challenges they face. The visit was particularly valuable to me, as it provided an overview of the day-to-day functions of TSH as well as the layout and the work that goes into caring for patients at the service. Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to the patients that I met on the day, specifically those who attended the Patient Partnership Group. It was a positive session and it was helpful to hear their experiences and feedback to both the Board and to myself.

I want to re-iterate that Annual Reviews remain an important part of the accountability process for NHS Boards. I look forward to hearing more about the developments that TSH outlined on the day, as well as the wider developments the Board looks to progress in future years.

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## KEY POINTS

I want to congratulate the Board for posting a breakeven position for 2024-25 and for previous financial years considering the challenges that all NHS Boards face. I understand that there are several pressures that are being monitored and mitigated in-year and in future years. I was also pleased to hear that the Board are ahead of their 2030 climate targets and that planning is in hand to address 2040 targets. I look forward to hearing from TSH in future years as to how these will be achieved. I ask that TSH maintain a regular correspondence with my officials to ensure that the financial risks and actions taken are well communicated.

I understand that robust workforce plans are in place for TSH, particularly regarding implementing a sustainable workforce model, as well as taking forward a recent organisational development initiative including resilience and succession planning. On staffing and workforce, I can see there is still a challenge for the Board regarding staff sickness absence being above NHS Scotland targets, however, I have noted that actions are in place to address this. Similarly, there is also a challenge with Day-Time Confinement (DTC) for patients that was conveyed to me quite prominently on the day. I expect from your presentation that as vacancies are filled in late 2025 and early 2026, there is an expectation that DTC will decrease to a 'never event'. Please keep my officials updated as to the progress of these vacancies, sickness absence rates and the extent of the reduction of DTC at TSH.

Something that was communicated to me on several occasions by both members of staff and patients was the number of digital inclusion initiatives that are being progressed by the Board. I understand that these initiatives are beneficial for both staff and patients alike and I understand the priority that the Board places on them. I ask that TSH engage with my officials on any plans to extend or expand these initiatives, specifically the 'Made Purple' pilot, to ensure that support is provided where feasible.

It was interesting to hear your response to the concerns raised by families of patients at TSH in the public session regarding the perception of TSH and patient admissions in the media. I note you have taken several actions to change perceptions and respond to media enquiries, however, I would like to hear more about the consideration of the branding of TSH and how this may shift perceptions of the service. I would ask that you engage with Scottish Government officials and TSH's sponsor team as you consider this approach and ensure that my officials are kept abreast of any progress and updates as they develop.

I was delighted to receive an update on TSH's Anchors Strategy and plans for the circular economy. Whilst TSH is a small Board and isolated geographically, it is good to see that work is still progressing on this strand and that some successes have been made, specifically the short-term employment programme and work within the local community.

I want to extend my gratitude to the Board for opening the new interim women's service in July 2025. I understand that this has been a challenge to get up and running in short amount of time, however, it is a success that women can now receive the care and treatment that

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they require within Scotland. I recognise that this has had second-order effects on the rest of the service regarding staffing resource and DTC. I am aware that there are plans in place to return to business as usual in early 2026. Furthermore, I hear what was communicated on the day regarding future years funding for the interim women's service. At this point the budget for future years has not yet been decided, however, my officials will continue to engage with the Board on budgetary matters, particularly about what funding is required to continue to deliver this vital service.

Finally, I want to note the concern flagged on the review day regarding the delay in a response to both Barron Recommendation 1 and the Forensic Governance Advisory Group's final report. I have confirmed to TSH and to other stakeholders that I have received the report and I will now take time to consider the findings carefully, guided by official advice. The Scottish Government will issue a formal response in due course. TSH should continue to operate as is, until any decision has been made following advice from the advisory group.

## LOOK FORWARD

Looking forward, it was pleasing to see that TSH is approaching the challenges that it is facing with diligence and the appropriate level of scrutiny. I would be interested to be kept abreast of developments regarding DTC, staff absence and the development of the business case for the female service and will encourage TSH to liaise with my officials on these items. I would also ask that TSH to remain transparent with both the sponsor team and TSH's Scottish Government finance contacts regarding digital inclusion and the future funding of the interim women's service.

## CONCLUSION

I would like to reiterate my thanks to the Board and the staff for their ongoing efforts, professionalism and commitment over the course of 2024-25 and the current financial year. If there is any further requirement for discussion of the issues highlighted on the day, please contact my officials who would be able to facilitate a meeting for this to take place.

Yours sincerely



**Tom Arthur MSP**

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