

Board Public Minutes – Approved

Public Meeting of the Board of Healthcare Improvement Scotland at
10.30, 2 December 2025, Delta House, Glasgow

Attendance

Present

Evelyn McPhail, Interim Chair
Abhishek Agarwal, Non-executive Director (from item 4.1)
Keith Charters, Non-executive Director
Suzanne Dawson, Non-executive Director/Chair of the Scottish Health Council/Vice Chair
Nicola Hanssen, Non-executive Director
Judith Kilbee, Non-executive Director
John Lund, Non-executive Director
Nikki Maran, Non-executive Director
Doug Moodie, Chair of the Care Inspectorate
Robbie Pearson, Chief Executive
Michelle Rogers, Non-executive Director
Duncan Service, Non-executive Director
Rob Tinlin, Non-executive Director

In Attendance

Eddie Docherty, Director of Quality Assurance and Regulation (QAR)
Melissa Dowdeswell, Director of Nursing and Integrated Care (NIC)
Gillian Gall, Interim Chief People Officer
Clare Morrison, Director of Engagement and Change
Safia Qureshi, Director of Evidence and Digital
Simon Watson, Medical Director/Director of Safety (from item 4.1)

Apologies

Ann Gow, Deputy Chief Executive

Meeting Support

Pauline Symaniak, Governance Manager

1. Opening Business

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair opened the public meeting of the Board by extending a warm welcome to all in attendance including Melissa Dowdeswell, attending her first Board meeting as Director of NIC. Apologies were noted as above.

1.2 Register of Interests

The Chair asked the Board to note the importance of the accuracy of the Register of Interests and asked that any interests should be declared that may arise during the course of the meeting.

Decision: The Board accepted the significant level of assurance offered and approved the register for publication.

1.3 Minutes of the Public Board meeting held on 24 September 2025

The minutes of the meeting were accepted as an accurate record.

Decision: The Board approved the minutes.

1.4 Action Points from the Public Board meeting on 24 September 2025

The progress updates were noted. In relation to the action about NHS inspections, the Director of QAR advised that inspection numbers have been reviewed, all NHS inspections are up to date and the key performance indicator will be met.

Decision: The Board approved closure of those actions recommended for closure.

1.5 Chair's Report

The Board received a report from the Interim Chair updating them on strategic developments, governance matters and stakeholder engagement. The Interim Chair highlighted the following:

- a) She held an introductory meeting with the NHS Scotland Chief Operating Officer and along with the Chief Executive, she held a very positive meeting with the newly appointed Patient Safety Commissioner.
- b) Several events were attended in the quarter covering the Scottish Approach to Change, Hospital at Home, Engagement Practice Learning and Improvement System, and the QAR staff development day.
- c) Non-executive Director mid-year reviews are almost complete. No changes to committee membership are proposed as skills broadly align with current appointments.

Decision: The Board noted the update.

Action: Share with the Board the briefing for the Annual Review on 15 December 2025.

1.6 Executive Report

The Chief Executive provided the report and highlighted the following:

- a) An appointment has been made to the Chief Finance and Risk Officer post and backfill will be identified to enable the Interim Chief People Officer role to continue. Thanks were extended to the Director of Finance at NHS24 who is providing oversight of finance matters meantime.

- b) HIS is continuing to respond to the needs of the Eljamel public inquiry and a risk has been raised related to this.
- c) HIS will give evidence for the Non-surgical Procedures and Functions of Medical Reviewers (Scotland) Bill on 9 December 2025.
- d) The 16th Citizens' Panel report has been published covering GP Practices, continuity of care and Duty of Candour.

The questions from the Board and the additional information provided covered the following:

- a) Agreeing Citizens' Panel topics can take time due to the evolving landscape of population health and liaison required for the Scottish Government (SG) commissions for it. HIS would like to be more proactive in sourcing its own choice of topics.
- b) The new Office of the Chief Executive held its first in-person development day on 24 November, providing a good start to creating a unified team underpinned by the One Team ethos.
- c) Regarding the Bill noted at c) above, HIS will continue to provide input and it will be important to reinforce a whole system approach.
- d) Regarding walk-in GP services pilots, discussions will be ongoing with SG and HIS will design measures for the evaluation of the pilots. Boards have been invited to submit proposals for pilot sites and delivery can be tailored to specific areas.
- e) Reports to HIS about unregistered independent healthcare providers come from a variety of sources including service users, the public and other services. Communications with the public are ongoing.
- f) In recent years, more additional allocations have moved into baseline funding which is a positive step. Ad hoc commissions continue and are difficult to plan for. Creating financial headroom and the HIS Employee model can mitigate issues.

Decision: The Board noted the report, highlighting the breadth of work delivered. The Board supported the proposal for a more proactive approach to Citizens' Panel topic selection.

2. Setting the Direction

2.1 Leading for our Future Action Plan

The Chief Executive provided the action plan which will support delivery of the Leading for Our Future aims.

In response to questions from the Board, the following additional information was provided:

- a) Regarding performance management of Associate Directors (ADs), this will be discussed at the Executive Remuneration Committee (ERC) meeting later that week. Executive Directors will be line managers for ADs and the Chief Executive will countersign appraisals. ERC will decide to what degree they are sighted but this might be an overview report from the Chief Executive.
- b) Regarding the commission of a development programme for the Performance and Delivery Board, this will align with performance objectives.
- c) Terms of reference have been created for the Performance and Delivery Board but aligning them with those for the Executive Team is ongoing.

Decision: The Board noted the updates to the action plan and accepted the moderate assurance offered.

Action: Document to be created setting out the various operational delivery groups and how they interplay with each other.

2.2 Scottish Approach to Change (SATC) Update

Diana Hekerem, Associate Director, Community Engagement and Transformational Change, joined the meeting for this item.

The Director of Engagement and Change provided a written update on this programme, noting that the initial commission has been delivered and next steps need to be agreed.

In response to questions from the Board, the following information was provided:

- a) The digital tools within the SATC include the Three Horizons framework for strategic planning.
- b) There is a challenge to provide ongoing support to boards and partnerships given the resource this would require. Creating case studies that exemplify the positive impact of the SATC are effective but also require quite a lot of resource. Thought will be given to a role here for the external reference group involved in the work and to bringing in expertise from Non-executive Directors.
- c) Pathfinders are helping to provide understanding of the practical aspects of using SATC such as working in partnership and cultural changes.

Decision: The Board noted the report and supported proposals for next steps. The Board accepted the moderate assurance offered.

Action: A future update to be provided to the Board setting out further progress.

3. Holding to Account including Finance and Resource

3.1 Organisational Performance Report

John Gebbie, Director of Finance NHS24 and David Johnston, Finance Manager, joined the meeting for this item.

The Chief Executive provided the performance report and the NHS24 Director of Finance highlighted the following in relation to financial performance:

- a) There is currently a £1.6M underspend which is forecast to continue to year end.
- b) The savings plan will be met in full and work continues to address the imbalance between recurring and non-recurring savings.

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee advised that the Committee considered the financial report and noted the need to increase the level of recurring savings to reduce pressure the following year.

In response to questions from the Board, the following additional information was provided:

- c) Regarding the underspend, there are some areas of investment planned on a non-recurring basis. It is not possible to hold any reserve into 2026-27.
- d) Work is ongoing to validate the budget but spend tends to increase in the latter part of the

year. Nonetheless, the forecast underspend is realistic.

- e) It was noted that the sickness absence rate has reduced to 3.3%.

Decision: The Board considered the performance report and accepted the moderate assurance offered.

3.2 Best Value Annual Report

The Chief Executive provided this report, noting that it was considered at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting the previous week and best value is regularly reported to the Quality and Performance Committee.

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee advised that the Committee welcomed the report and noted that it is helpful in demonstrating the quality and impact of our work, and provides useful information, for example, for the annual review and the annual audit.

In response to a question from the Board about the audience for the report, it was advised that the report will be published but there is no formal requirement for submission. Benchmarking was undertaken last year but a comparison hasn't been completed with other boards.

Decision: The Board approved the report and accepted the moderate assurance offered.

3.3 Integrated Planning Update

The Director of Engagement and Change provided a paper setting out an update on the arrangements for integrated planning for 2026-27, noting that formal guidance from Scottish Government has not yet been received.

Decision: The Board noted the update and accepted the moderate assurance offered.

4. Engaging Stakeholders

4.1 Communications and Engagement Strategy

Laura Fulton, Chief Pharmacist, joined the meeting for this item.

The Chief Pharmacist presented an interim working strategy which would allow development to progress while maintaining an effective communications function. She advised that the Audit and Risk Committee had reviewed it at their meeting the previous week and were content with the strategy subject to comments which are incorporated into the paper presented to the Board.

In response to questions from the Board, the following additional information was provided:

- a) As the strategy develops, more consideration will be given to the audience for it and to the information detailed within the stakeholder matrices.
- b) Regarding measures for the impact of the strategy, these will be considered as the work develops and could include surveying the awareness of HIS with different stakeholders.

Decision: The Board approved the strategy as an interim working document, subject to comments made. The Board accepted the moderate assurance offered.

5. Assessing Risk

5.1 Risk Management: Strategic Risks

The Chief Executive provided the latest strategic risk register.

The Chair of the Staff Governance Committee advised that the Committee had discussed if the risk related to workforce was correctly scored. It was also noted that the risk related to organisational change may need to be reviewed. It was agreed that the risk sub-committee will examine these two risks and will consider the need for all risks to have specific mitigations with timelines.

The Non-executive Cyber Security Champion noted additional mitigations for the risk related to cyber security, including a new out of hours service from the Cyber Security Centre of Excellence.

Decision: The Board gained assurance from management of the strategic risks and accepted a limited level of assurance on the strategic risks which are out of appetite. Regarding the risks which are within appetite, they accepted a significant level of assurance when the residual score is medium or low and a moderate level of assurance when the score is high.

Action: Risk sub-committee to examine the workforce and organisational change risks and the inclusion of accurate and timebound mitigations for all risks.

6. Governance

6.1 Action Plan Updates - Governance Committee Annual Reports 2024-25 and Blueprint for Good Governance

The Head of Planning and Governance provided the two action plans.

The Chair of the Quality and Performance Committee advised that the Committee is making progress with receiving reports that detail impact and outcomes of work. It was noted that this is a theme for all committees.

Decision: The Board noted the updates against the actions from the Committee annual reports and approved the closure of the Blueprint for Good Governance plan given actions are complete. The Board accepted the significant assurance offered.

6.2 to 6.8 Committee Key Points and Minutes

Committee Chairs provided key points and approved minutes as follows:

- Governance Committee Chairs: key points from the meeting on 19 November 2025
- Audit and Risk Committee: key points from the meeting on 26 November 2025; approved minutes from the meeting on 3 September 2025
- Executive Remuneration Committee: it was noted that the next meeting is scheduled for 4 December 2025
- Quality and Performance Committee: key points from the meeting on 5 November 2025; approved minutes from the meeting on 27 August 2025
- Scottish Health Council: key points from the meeting on 13 November 2025; approved minutes from the meeting on 4 September 2025
- Staff Governance Committee: approved minutes from the meeting on 6 August 2025. The

Chair of the Committee gave a verbal update on the key points from the meeting on 22 October 2025

- Succession Planning Committee: key points from the meeting on 20 November 2025; approved minutes from the meeting on 7 August 2025

In response to a question from the Board, the Chair of the Succession Planning Committee advised that appointing a Public Partner to the Committee is in progress and the Succession Plan refers to Non-executive Directors only.

Decision: The Board noted the key points and minutes.

7.Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

8.Date of Next Meeting

Members of the press and public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, disclosure of which would be prejudicial to the public interest.

Approved by: Evelyn McPhail

Date: 25 March 2026