

Health Finance, Corporate Governance &
Value Directorate
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Scottish Government
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NHS Board Chairs
Copy to Board Secretaries

via email

18th November, 2020

Dear Colleagues

COVID-19 AND BOARD GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Following the recent NHS Chairs meeting on 26 October, I thought it would be helpful if I set out our ask on Boards around their governance arrangements as we continue to manage the current Covid-19 outbreak.

As incidence of the virus continues to increase, I am mindful of the other operational pressures that we must also prepare for, particularly seasonal flu and the typical impact of winter weather. It remains the primary duty of all Boards to ensure an absolute focus on the response to the current situation and that they provide all necessary support to the Chief Executive and the executive team as they lead the health system's response to the pandemic.

As I set out in my letter to you in March, effective governance will need to be maintained throughout this unprecedented period and I know that you are all taking action in this regard. You should ensure that, for your Board, the revised governance mechanisms will be both effective but proportionate to ensure the maximum focus on our response to the challenges we face. You should ensure that your Board are fully sighted on the revised model that you will adopt and you should also ensure that they are clear on the particular role that they will play in that model. As before, for good governance reasons, the Chair should not make a unilateral decision on a model unless that is unavoidable.

All Boards will have differing challenges and areas that they will want to provide additional focus on. Patient safety remains paramount but you will wish to ensure that, building on the lessons from earlier this year, the model enables agile and effective decision making, places staff and their resilience at the centre and continues to build important links with the public and community at this time.



As always, you should ensure you develop your arrangements in line with the requirements in legislation and within existing Standing Orders. Where the new arrangements don't comply, it will be important to document the reasons behind this variation and confirm that the Board was aware of this when making the changes. I am also aware that your Board Secretaries have been continuing to work on making Board papers and business open and accessible to the public through MS Teams etc. It is important that you continue to take forward your local approach to this in an effective but secure manner, so that our communities can be assured around the work that all Boards are taking forward.

If you have any queries, these should be sent to OCENHS@gov.scot .

Yours sincerely



Richard McCallum
Interim Director of Health Finance and Governance