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Keith Redpath
Chair
NHS National Services Scotland

Cc: Mary Morgan, Chief Executive

23 December 2021

Dear Keith,

NHS NATIONAL SERVICES SCOTLAND (NSS) – ANNUAL REVIEW 2020-21

I am writing to you following the Annual Review held on Monday 8 November 2021. I would like to record my gratitude to both you and Mary for the helpful discussion and to thank all staff involved in preparation of this review. This letter summarises the key points of discussion.

LOOK BACK ON PANDEMIC EXPERIENCE IN 2020-21

It was good to be able to recognise and reflect on the scale of work NSS carried out to support NHSScotland's response to Covid-19 so far, particularly covering the areas of; provision of PPE; the establishment of the three regional laboratories and 94 testing centres; the creation and mobilisation of the National Contact Centre for Test and Protect; the Vaccination Programme; and the construction, procurement and decommissioning of the Louisa Jordan. In each one of these areas, there has been a huge amount of work required and I do not underestimate the commitment and dedication of staff to deliver the successes that we have seen across each of these large-scale programmes.

We discussed some of the learning that has come from the work that NSS has taken forward and I know that you will continue to keep the sponsor team apprised of how the organisation is building on these lessons.

While upscaling services to support Covid-19 has been prioritised, at the same time, the organisation still met 76 performance targets. This is to NSS' credit and while some areas of work have been delayed due to the reprioritisation of services in response to Covid-19, I understand that the impact of such delays has always been given due consideration, including the impact to other organisations and delivery partners.

It was helpful to understand the extent to which NSS staff have gone above and beyond to meet the level of demand and short deadlines in the response to Covid-19. It was noted that for some staff, this has resulted in significant additional hours worked and even instances of

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staff forgoing annual level for extended periods of time. In this context, I would want to emphasise the importance of supporting the wellbeing of your workforce. I know that this is something that is continually being reviewed by the Board, with staff actively engaged with, to ensure there is a sustainable balance between service delivery and safeguarding staff wellbeing going forward. I also appreciate that this can be a challenge at certain pressure points, due to some areas being dependent on key individuals.

I was interested to hear about NSS' involvement in Scotland's manufacturing of personal protection equipment and I would ask that NSS remains actively engaged in further work with Scottish Government and Scottish Enterprise, to support sustainability in this sector going forward.

FORWARD LOOK

I understand NSS are reflecting on the benefits identified throughout the pandemic to ensure future sustainability of NSS' services. Benefits discussed included a planned move to remote working, with many staff benefitting from the more flexible arrangements. You also highlighted the benefit of the scheduling of blood donations, which enables the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service to plan around the requirements for various blood types.

Furthermore, I appreciate that there are additional costs in relation to the increase in services NSS are providing and understand there will be review of the recurrent funding requirements going forward to address these service costs.

I was grateful for your update on the on-going review of the screening services and note that this review requires new processes to be implemented, which are underway and being prioritised by NSS. I also understand that, although NSS work in partnership with the Boards delivering these services, NSS are not able to instruct other Boards, and therefore you remain reliant on their partners to support the successful delivery of these services.

We discussed the fact NSS has been commended for innovations and rapid delivery of digital solutions. However, I understand that there is increasing demand and pressure for NSS to deliver numerous digital programmes in challenging timelines, particularly given the current capacity within the Board. I urge you to continue to work closely with Scottish Government colleagues and communicate where there may be risks in the delivery of programmes of work. A clear understanding of priorities moving forward will remain vital in this area.

CLOSING REMARKS

I would ask that you please extend my gratitude to NSS staff for their continued excellent work, being carried out in a number of different areas. The breadth of discussion points at the Annual Review once again highlighted to me the significant role NSS has played in response to the pandemic.

Yours sincerely,



Kevin Stewart

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