



STANDING ORDERS

(NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) is the common name for the Common Services Agency (CSA) for the Scottish Health Service)

March 2025

STANDING ORDERS FOR THE PROCEEDINGS AND BUSINESS OF NHS NATIONAL SERVICES SCOTLAND NHS BOARD

1 General

- 1.1 National Services Scotland (NSS) was established as the Common Services Agency in 1974 under The National Health Service (Functions of the Common Services Agency) (Scotland) Order 1974.
- 1.2 These Standing Orders for regulation and the conduct and proceedings of the Common Services Agency (more commonly known as NSS) Board are in line with The Common Services Agency (Membership and Procedure) regulations (1991 No.564 (S.49).
- 1.3 The procedures set out below also take into account the terms of The Health Boards (Membership and Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (2001 No. 302), as amended up to and including The Health Boards (Membership and Procedure) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2016 (2016 No. 3), where appropriate, to better align with the Health Boards that it serves.
- 1.4 The NHS Scotland Health Boards and Special Health Boards - Blueprint for Good Governance Second Edition (issued through DL (2022) 38) has informed these Standing Orders. The Blueprint states Boards are primarily responsible for the delivery of the five primary functions of governance. These are described as:
 - 1.4.1 Setting the direction**, including clarifying priorities and defining change and transformational expectations.
 - 1.4.2 Holding the Executive Management Team to account** by seeking assurance that the organisation is being effectively managed and change is being successfully delivered.
 - 1.4.3 Managing risks** to the quality, delivery, and sustainability of services.
 - 1.4.4 Engaging with key stakeholders**, as and when appropriate.
 - 1.4.5 Influencing** the Board's and the wider organisational culture.

Further information on the role of the Board, Board members, the Chair, Vice-Chair, and the Chief Executive is available on the NHS Scotland Board Development website (<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/17367/board-development>)
- 1.5 The Scottish Ministers shall appoint the members of the Board. The Scottish Ministers shall also attend to any issues relating to the resignation and removal, suspension, and disqualification of members in line with the above regulations.
- 1.6 Any statutory provision, regulation, or direction by Scottish Ministers, shall have precedence if they conflict with these Standing Orders.
- 1.7 Any one or more of these Standing Orders may be varied or revoked at a meeting of the Board by a majority of members present and voting, provided the notice for the meeting at which the proposal is to be considered clearly

states the extent of the proposed repeal, addition, or amendment. Standing Order 1.6 will not be capable of suspension.

- 1.8 The Board will annually review its Standing Orders.
- 1.9 Any member of the Board may on reasonable cause shown be suspended from the Board or disqualified for taking part in any business of the Board in specified circumstances. The Scottish Ministers may by determination suspend a member from taking part in the business (including meetings) of the Board. Paragraph 5.4 sets out when the person presiding at a Board meeting may suspend a Board member for the remainder of a specific Board meeting. The Standards Commission for Scotland can apply sanctions if a Board member is found to have breached the NSS Code of Conduct for Board Members, and those include suspension and disqualification. The regulations set out at 1.2 also set out grounds for why a person may be disqualified from being a member of the Board.

Board Members – Ethical Conduct

- 1.10 Members have a personal responsibility to comply with the NSS Code of Conduct for Board Members. The Code has been issued by the Scottish Ministers, with the approval of the Scottish Parliament, as required by the Ethical Standards in Public Life (Scotland) Act 2000, as amended. Complaints of breaches of the NSS Code of Conduct for Board Members are investigated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner and adjudicated upon by the Standards Commission for Scotland.
- 1.11 The Board has appointed a Standards Officer (Associate Director for Corporate Governance (Board Secretary)). This individual is responsible for carrying out the duties of that role, however they may delegate the carrying out of associated tasks to other members of staff. The Board's appointed Standards Officer shall ensure that the Board's Register of Interests is maintained. When a member needs to update or amend their entry in the Register, they must notify the Board's appointed Standards Officer of the need to change the entry within one month after the date the matter is required to be registered.
- 1.12 The Board's appointed Standards Officer shall ensure the Register is available for public inspection at the principal offices of the Board at all reasonable times and will be included on the Board's website.
- 1.13 Members must always consider the relevance of any interests they may have to any business presented to the Board or one of its committees. Members must observe paragraphs 5.5 - 5.11 of these Standing Orders and have regard to Section 5 of the NSS Code of Conduct (Declaration of Interests) for Board Members.
- 1.14 In case of doubt as to whether any interest or matter should be declared, in the interests of transparency, members are advised to make a declaration and not to participate in consideration of that item.

- 1.15 Members must comply with Section 3.13 - 3.21 of the NSS Code of Conduct for Board Members in relation to gifts and hospitality. Members should register with the Standards Officer any offer of gifts and hospitality that have been refused.
- 1.16 The Standard's Officer shall provide a copy of these Standing Orders to all members of the Board on appointment. A copy shall also be held on the Board's website.

2 Chair

- 2.1 The Scottish Ministers shall appoint the Chair of the Board.

3 Vice-Chair

- 3.1 The Chair shall nominate a candidate or candidates for Vice-Chair to the Cabinet Secretary. The candidate(s) must be a non-executive member of the Board. The Board's Whistleblowing Champion and Board Members who are employees of the organisation are disqualified from being Vice-Chair. The Cabinet Secretary will in turn determine who to appoint based on evidence of effective performance and evidence that the member has the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the position. Following the decision, the Board shall appoint the member as Vice-Chair. Any person so appointed shall, so long as he or she remains a member of the Board, continue in office for such a period as the Board may decide.
- 3.2 The Vice-Chair may at any time resign from that office by giving notice in writing to the Chair. The process to appoint a replacement Vice-Chair is the process described at paragraph 3.1.
- 3.3 Where the Chair has died, ceased to hold office, or is unable for a sustained period to perform his or her duties due to illness, absence from Scotland or for any other reason, then the Board's Standard's Officer should refer this to the Scottish Government. The Cabinet Secretary will confirm which member may assume the role of interim chair in the period until the appointment of a new chair, or the return of the appointed chair. Where the Chair is absent for a short period due to leave (for whatever reason), the Vice-Chair shall assume the role of the Chair in the conduct of the business of the Board. In either of these circumstances references to the Chair shall, so long as there is no Chair able to perform the duties, be taken to include references to either the interim chair or the Vice-Chair. If the Vice-Chair has been appointed as the Interim Chair, then the process described at paragraph 3.1 will apply to replace the Vice-Chair.

4 Calling and Notice of Board Meetings

- 4.1 The Chair may call a meeting of the Board at any time and shall call a meeting when required to do so by the Board. The Board shall meet not less than once

in every three months in any given year and will annually approve a forward schedule of meeting dates.

- 4.2 The Chair will determine the final agenda for all Board meetings. The agenda may include an item for any other business; however, this can only be for business which the Board is being informed of for awareness, rather than being asked to make a decision. No business shall be transacted at any meeting of the Board other than that specified in the notice of the meeting except on grounds of urgency. The Chair must rule that it is a matter of urgency and give the reasons for the ruling to be noted in the minutes. The item must be made known at the start of the meeting when the order of business is decided.
- 4.3 Any member may propose an item of business to be included in the agenda of a future Board meeting by submitting a request to the Chair. If the Chair elects to agree to the request, then the Chair may decide whether the item is to be considered at the Board meeting which immediately follows the receipt of the request, or a future Board meeting. The Chair will inform the member which meeting the item will be discussed. If any member has a specific legal duty or responsibility to discharge which requires that member to present a report to the Board, then that report will be included in the agenda.
- 4.4 In the event that the Chair decides not to include the item of business on the agenda of a Board meeting, then the Chair will inform the member in writing as to the reasons why.
- 4.5 A Board meeting may be called if one third of the whole number of members including at least two members who are also not officers signs a requisition for that purpose. The requisition must specify the business proposed to be transacted. The Chair is required to call a meeting within 7 days of receiving the requisition. If the Chair does not do so, or simply refuses to call a meeting, those members who presented the requisition may call a meeting by signing an instruction to approve the notice calling the meeting provided that no business shall be transacted at the meeting other than that specified in the requisition.
- 4.6 Before each meeting of the Board, a notice of the meeting (in the form of an agenda), specifying the time, place and business proposed to be transacted at it and approved by the Chair, or by a member authorised by the Chair to approve on that person's behalf, shall be circulated to every member to be available to them at least three clear days before the meeting. The notice shall be distributed along with any papers for the meeting that are available at that point.
- 4.7 With regard to calculating clear days for the purpose of notice under 4.6 and 4.9, the period of notice excludes the day the notice is sent out and the day of the meeting itself. Additionally, only working days (Monday to Friday) are to be used when calculating clear days; weekend days and public holidays should be excluded.

Example: If a Board is meeting on a Wednesday, the notice and papers for the meeting should be distributed to members no later than the preceding

Thursday. The three clear days would be Friday, Monday, and Tuesday. If the Monday was a public holiday, then the notice and papers should be distributed no later than the preceding Wednesday.

- 4.8 Lack of service of the notice on any member shall not affect the validity of a meeting.
- 4.9 Board meetings shall be held in public. A public notice of the time and place of the meeting shall be provided at least three clear days before the meeting is held. The notice and the meeting papers shall also be placed on the Board's website. The meeting papers will include the minutes of committee meetings which the relevant committee has approved. The exception is that the meeting papers will not include the minutes of the Remuneration Committee. The Board may determine its own approach for committees to inform it of business which has been discussed in committee meetings for which the final minutes are not yet available. For items of business which the Board will consider in private session (see paragraph 5.22), only the Board members will normally receive the meeting papers for those items, unless the person presiding agrees that others may receive them.

5 Conduct of Meetings

Authority of the Person Presiding at a Board Meeting

- 5.1 The Chair shall preside at every meeting of the Board. The Vice-Chair shall preside if the Chair is absent. If both the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent, the members present at the meeting shall choose a Board member who is not an employee of a Board to preside.
- 5.2 The duty of the person presiding at a meeting of the Board or one of its committees is to ensure that the Standing Orders or the committee's terms of reference are observed, to preserve order, to ensure fairness between members, and to determine all questions of order and competence. The ruling of the person presiding shall be final and shall not be open to question or discussion.
- 5.3 The person presiding may direct that the meeting can be conducted in any way that allows members to participate, regardless of where they are physically located, for example, videoconferencing, teleconferencing. For the avoidance of doubt, those members using such facilities will be regarded as present at the meeting.
- 5.4 In the event that any member who disregards the authority of the person presiding, obstructs the meeting, or conducts himself/herself inappropriately the person presiding may suspend the member for the remainder of the meeting. If a person so suspended refuses to leave when required by the person presiding to do so, the person presiding will adjourn the meeting in line with paragraph 5.12. For paragraphs 5.5 to 5.21, reference to 'Chair' means the person who is presiding the meeting, as determined by paragraph 5.1.

Quorum

- 5.5 The Board will be deemed to meet only when there are present, as per paragraph 5.3 and entitled to vote, a quorum of at least one third of the whole number of members, including at least two members who are not employees of a Board. The quorum for committees will be set out in their terms of reference, however it can never be less than two Board members.
- 5.6 In determining whether a quorum is present the Chair must consider the effect of any declared interests.
- 5.7 If a member, or an associate of the member, has any pecuniary or other interest, direct or indirect, in any contract, proposed contract or other matter under consideration by the Board or a committee, the member should declare that interest at the start of the meeting. This applies whether that interest is already recorded in the Board Members' Register of Interests. Following such a declaration, the member shall be excluded from the Board or committee meeting when the item is under consideration and should not be counted as participating in that meeting for quorum or voting purposes.
- 5.8 Paragraph 5.7 will not apply where a member or an associate of theirs, interest in any company, body or person is so remote or insignificant that it cannot reasonably be regarded as likely to affect any influence in the consideration or discussion of any question with respect to that contract or matter. In March 2015, the Standards Commission granted a dispensation to NHS Board members who are also voting members of integration joint boards. The effect is that those members do not need to declare as an interest that they are a member of an integration joint board when taking part in discussions of general health & social care issues. However, members still must declare other interests as required by Section 5 of the NSS Code of Conduct for Board Members.
- 5.9 If a question arises at a Board meeting as to the right of a member to participate in the meeting (or part of the meeting) for voting or quorum purposes, the question may, before the conclusion of the meeting be referred to the Chair. The Chair's ruling in relation to any member other than the Chair is to be final and conclusive. If a question arises about the participation of the Chair in the meeting (or part of the meeting) for voting or quorum purposes, the question is to be decided by the members at that meeting. For this latter purpose, the Chair is not to be counted for quorum or voting purposes.
- 5.10 Paragraphs 5.6-5.9 shall equally apply to members of any Board committees, whether they are also members of the Board, for example stakeholder representatives.
- 5.11 When a quorum is not present, the only action that can be taken are to either adjourn to another time or abandon the meeting altogether and call another one. The quorum should be monitored throughout the conduct of the meeting in the event that a member leaves during a meeting, with no intention of returning.

The Chair may set a time limit to permit the quorum to be achieved before electing to adjourn, abandon or bring a meeting that has started to a close.

Adjournment

- 5.12 If it is necessary or expedient to do so for any reason (including disorderly conduct or other misbehaviour at a meeting), a meeting may be adjourned to another day, time, and place. A meeting of the Board, or of a committee of the Board, may be adjourned by the Chair until such day, time and place as the Chair may specify.

Business of the Meeting

The Agenda

- 5.13 If a member wishes to add an item of business which is not in the notice of the meeting, he or she must make a request to the Chair ideally in advance of the day of the meeting and certainly before the start of the meeting. The Chair will determine whether the matter is urgent as per paragraph 4.2, and accordingly whether it may be discussed at the meeting under any other business (AOB).
- 5.14 The Chair may change the running order of items for discussion on the agenda at the meeting. Please also refer to paragraph 4.2.

Decision-Making

- 5.15 The Chair may invite the lead for any item to introduce the item before inviting contributions from members. Members should indicate to the Chair if they wish to contribute, and the Chair will invite all who do so to contribute in turn. Members are expected to question and challenge proposals constructively and carefully to reach and articulate a considered view on the suitability of proposals.
- 5.16 The Chair will consider the discussion, and whether a consensus has been reached. Where the Chair concludes that consensus has been reached, then the Chair will normally end the discussion of an item by inviting agreement to the outcomes from the discussion and the resulting decisions of the Board.
- 5.17 As part of the process of stating the resulting decisions of the Board, the Chair may propose an adaptation of what may have been recommended to the Board in the accompanying report, to reflect the outcome of the discussion.
- 5.18 The Board may reach consensus on an item of business without taking a formal vote, and this will be normally what happens where consensus has been reached.
- 5.19 In relation to matters of urgency that cannot wait until the next available meeting of the Board or the relevant Board Committee, The Chief Executive or the Associate Director Corporate Governance (Board Secretary) in conjunction with the Board Chair or in the case of a Standing Committee, the Chair of the

Committee, may authorise the matter to be resolved by electronic correspondence to the Board or Committee. Such matters will be presented to the Board or Committee in the usual fashion – i.e. a report stating the action required, coupled with any supporting documentation. Once the decision has been reached a minute will be produced and will be presented to the next available meeting of the Board or Board Committee for approval.

Voting

- 5.19 Where the Chair concludes that there is not a consensus on the Board's position on the item and/or what it wishes to do, then the Chair will put the decision to a vote. If at least two Board members ask for a decision to be put to a vote, then the Chair will do so. Before putting any decision to vote, the Chair will summarise the outcome of the discussion and the proposal(s) for the members to vote on.
- 5.20 Where a vote is taken, the decision shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present and voting on the question. In the case of an equality of votes, the Chair shall have a second or casting vote. The Chair may determine the method for taking the vote, which may be by a show of hands, or by ballot, or any other method the Chair determines.

Board Meeting in Public

- 5.21 While the meeting is in public the Board may not exclude members of the public and the press (for the purpose of reporting the proceedings) from attending the meeting.

Board Meeting in Private

- 5.22 The Board may agree to meet in private to consider certain items of business. The Board may decide to meet in private on the following grounds:
- 5.22.1** The Board is still in the process of developing proposals or its position on certain matters and needs time for private deliberation.
 - 5.22.2** The business relates to the commercial interests of any person and confidentiality is required, for example, when there is an ongoing tendering process or contract negotiation.
 - 5.22.3** The business necessarily involves reference to personal information and requires to be discussed in private to uphold the Data Protection Principles.
 - 5.22.4** The Board is otherwise legally obliged to respect the confidentiality of the information being discussed.
- 5.23 The minutes of the meeting will reflect when the Board has resolved to meet in private.

Minutes

- 5.24 The names of members present at a meeting of the Board, or of a committee of the Board, shall be recorded in the minute of the meeting. The names of other persons in attendance shall also be recorded.
- 5.25 The Board's Standard's Officer (or his/her authorised nominee) shall prepare the minutes of meetings of the Board and its committees. The Board or the committee shall review the draft minutes at the following meeting. The person presiding at that meeting shall sign the approved minute.

6 Matters Reserved for the Board

Introduction

- 6.1 The Scottish Government retains the authority to approve certain items of business. There are other items of the business which can only be approved at an NHS Board meeting, due to either Scottish Government directions or a Board decision in the interests of good governance practice.
- 6.2 The matters reserved to the Board are:
- 6.2.1** Corporate Governance Framework, including the Board Assurance Framework, Board Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, terms of reference of all its committees and appointment of committee members, Standing Financial Instructions, and the Scheme of Delegation.
 - 6.2.2** Organisational Values.
 - 6.2.3** The strategies for all the functions that it has planning responsibility for, subject to any provisions for major service change which require Ministerial approval.
 - 6.2.4** Annually, The Delivery Plan (following consideration by Scottish Government).
 - 6.2.5** Corporate objectives or corporate plans which have been created to implement its agreed strategies.
 - 6.2.6** Risk Management Strategy and Approach.
 - 6.2.7** Financial plan for the forthcoming year, and the opening revenue and capital budgets.
 - 6.2.8** Annual accounts and report. (Note: This must be considered when the Board meets in private session. To respect Parliamentary Privilege, the Board cannot publish the annual accounts, or any information drawn from it before the accounts are laid before the Scottish Parliament. Similarly, the Board cannot publish the report of the external auditors of their annual accounts in this period.)
 - 6.2.9** Any business case item that is beyond the scope of its delegated financial authority before it is presented to the Scottish Government for approval. The Board shall comply with the Scottish Capital Investment Manual.

- 6.2.10** The Board shall approve the content, format, and frequency of performance reporting to the Board.
- 6.2.11** The appointment of the Board's chief internal auditor. (Note: This applies either when the proposed chief internal auditor will be an employee of the Board, or when the chief internal auditor is engaged through a contract with an external provider. The audit committee should advise the Board on the appointment, and the Board may delegate to the audit committee oversight of the process which leads to a recommendation for appointment.)
- 6.2.12** Arrangements for the approval of all policies.
- 6.2.13** The system for responding to any civil actions raised against the Board.
- 6.2.14** The system for responding to any occasion where the Board is being investigated and/or prosecuted for a criminal or regulatory offence.

- 6.3 The Board itself may resolve that other items of business be presented to it for approval.

7 Delegation of Authority by the Board

- 7.1 Except for the Matters Reserved for the Board, the Board may delegate authority to act on its behalf to committees, individual Board members, or other Board employees. In practice this is achieved primarily through the Board's approval of the Standing Financial Instructions ([NSS SFI's](#)) and the Scheme of Delegation.
- 7.2 The Board may delegate responsibility for certain matters to the Chair for action. In such circumstances, the Chair should inform the Board of any decision or action subsequently taken on these matters.
- 7.3 The Board and its officers must comply with the NHS Scotland Property Transactions Handbook, and this is cross-referenced in the Scheme of Delegation.
- 7.4 The Board may, from time to time, request reports on any matter or may decide to reserve any particular decision for itself. The Board may withdraw any previous act of delegation to allow this.

8 Execution of Documents

- 8.1 Where a document requires to be authenticated under legislation or rule of law relating to the authentication of documents under the Law of Scotland, or where a document is otherwise required to be authenticated on behalf of the Board, it shall be signed by an executive member of the Board, or any person duly authorised to sign under the Scheme of Delegation in accordance with the Requirements of Writing (Scotland) Act 1995. Before authenticating any document, the person authenticating the document shall satisfy themselves that all necessary approvals in terms of the Board's procedures have been satisfied. A document executed by the Board in accordance with this paragraph shall be self-proving for the purposes of the Requirements of Writing (Scotland) Act 1995.

- 8.2 Scottish Ministers shall direct which officers of the Board can sign on their behalf in relation to the acquisition, management, and disposal of land.
- 8.3 Any authorisation to sign documents granted to an officer of the Board shall terminate upon that person ceasing (for whatever reason) from being an employee of the Board, without further intimation or action by the Board.

9 Committees

- 9.1 Subject to any direction issued by Scottish Ministers, the Board shall appoint such committees (and sub-committees) as it thinks fit. The Blueprint for Good Governance, Second Edition identifies the committees which the Board must establish.
- 9.2 As of 1 April 2024, the NSS Board has appointed the following Standing Committees:
- 9.2.1** NSS Audit & Risk Committee
 - 9.2.2** NSS Finance, Procurement & Performance Committee
 - 9.2.3** NSS Clinical Governance Committee
 - 9.2.5** NSS Staff Governance Committee
 - 9.2.6** NSS Remuneration Committee
- 9.3 The Board shall appoint the chairs of all committees and sub-committees established through these Standing Orders. The Board shall approve the terms of reference and membership of the committees. The Board shall review these as and when required and shall review the terms within 2 years of their approval if there has not been a review.
- 9.4 The Board shall appoint committee and sub-committee members to fill any vacancy in the membership as and when required. If a committee is required by regulation to be constituted with a particular membership, then the regulation must be followed.
- 9.5 Provided there is no Scottish Government instruction to the contrary, any non-executive Board member may replace a committee member who is also a non-executive Board member, if such a replacement is necessary to achieve the quorum of the committee.
- 9.6 The Board's Standing Orders relating to the calling and notice of Board meetings, conduct of meetings, and conduct of Board members shall also be applied to committee and sub-committee meetings. The general expectation is that committee and sub-committee meetings shall not be held in public, and the associated committee papers shall not be placed on the Board's website, unless the Board specifically elects otherwise.

- 9.7 Generally, Board members who are not members of a committee may attend a committee meeting and have access to the meeting papers. However, if the committee elects to consider certain items as restricted business (in private), then the meeting papers for those items will normally only be provided to members of that committee. The person presiding the committee meeting may agree to share the (private) meeting papers for restricted business papers with others.
- 9.8 The Board shall approve a calendar of meeting dates for its committees and sub-committees. The committee and sub-committee chair may call a meeting any time and shall call a meeting when requested to do so by the Board.
- 9.9 The Board may authorise committees to co-opt members for a period up to one year, subject to the approval of both the Board and the Accountable Officer. A committee may decide this is necessary to enhance the knowledge, skills, and experience within its membership to address a particular element of the committee's business. A co-opted member is one who is not a member of National Services Scotland NHS Board and is not to be counted when determining the committee's quorum.