



NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Public Board Meeting

**25 May 2022
Item 12**

THIS PAPER IS FOR NOTING

**ANNUAL REVIEW 2020/21 FEEDBACK LETTER FROM SCOTTISH
GOVERNMENT**

Lead Director Author	Pauline Howie, Chief Executive Lindsey Ralph, Board Secretary
Action required	The Board is asked to note the feedback letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care on the Service's Annual Review held on 16 March 2022.
Key points	<p>The Annual Review is the formal process through which health boards review their achievements and challenges over the year and outline future plans.</p> <p>A summary of the main points discussed and the key areas of focus for the Board arising from the Service's Annual Review 2020/21 with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care on 16 March 2022 are contained in the letter dated 3 May 2022. The actions contained in the letter will be progressed by the Executive Team.</p> <p>The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care recorded his thanks to the Service and staff for the sustained professional and commitment in the face of unprecedented and unremitting pressures during the last 2 years.</p>
Timing	The Annual Review feedback letter is shared with Board members and placed on the Service's public facing website.
Benefits to Patients	The Service practices the principles of good clinical governance to ensure that safe, effective and person centred care exists across the organisation to deliver high quality care to patients.
Equality and Diversity	No issues identified.

E: cabsechsc@gov.scot

Tom Steele and Pauline Howie
SAS Chair and Chief Executive
The Scottish Ambulance Service

Via email:
tom.steele2@nhs.scot Pauline.Howie@nhs.scot

3rd May 2022

Dear Chair and Chief Executive,

SAS – ANNUAL REVIEW 2020/21

I am writing to you following the SAS Annual Review held via teleconference on 16 March 2022. I would like to record my thanks to you and everyone who was involved in the preparations for this Review.

In line with last year, in-person Reviews have not proved possible due to ongoing Covid-19 pandemic measures. Nonetheless, Annual Reviews remain an important part of the accountability process for the NHS. As such, we have arranged appropriate sessions with the Chair and Chief Executive of each Board via video conference. I was supported in the meeting by John Burns, Chief Operating Officer of NHS Scotland and relevant policy officials from the Primary Care Directorate.

The agenda for this year's round of Reviews was split into two sections: a look back over the period of the pandemic to date; and a look forward, in line with the current Board resilience and mobilisation plans.

This letter summarises the main points discussed and the actions arising from the Review.

LOOK BACK

You provided a helpful update on SAS's initial response to the pandemic from late February 2020. There is no doubt about the significant pressures facing the Service throughout the pandemic. During our discussion, you described how you have organised your internal governance to ensure flexibility and appropriate scrutiny, to deal effectively with the rapidly evolving challenges throughout the pandemic.

Despite the challenges of increased demand for Services and higher acuity patient presentations, you continued to focus on improving your response to the sickest of patients, in particular your Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC) rate targets, 30 day survival rates and the reduction in hospital conveyance rates which exceeded targets and aspirations. However, challenges remain

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with lower acuity response and you highlighted the importance of continued support for your demand and capacity programme, as well as a focus on improving turnaround times for ambulance resources at A&E sites as key to improving response times for these lower acuity calls. My officials will continue to engage with you and with Health Board partners on these key areas of work in the coming weeks and months

The Service has played a key role throughout the pandemic in our mobile testing programme and I would like to record my thanks to you and everyone involved for the hard work and dedication which has seen this programme be so successful. I was interested to hear how you are now working with partners and with MTU staff to look at opportunities for how these staff can maintain employment and continue to support our Health and Social Care Services and I will be keen to hear how this develops as the role of the testing programme reduces.

As well as all the successful work undertaken in response to the pandemic, I was pleased to hear of the non-covid related work that has been ongoing to prevent further harm to our population including your work on major trauma, your continued involvement in the out of hospital cardiac arrest strategy and your focus on improved care for stroke patients. These areas of work will remain a key focus of your strategic developments moving forward and will continue to benefit patients throughout the country.

Like every workforce throughout the NHS, SAS has been, and remains, under immense pressure. Issues with rest break compliance and staff absence rates existed prior to the pandemic and have been exacerbated, with high levels of COVID and non-COVID-related absences. The resilience and staff wellbeing of the workforce is key, and I was pleased to see that this remains at the forefront of your planning through online staff engagement sessions and a new strategy on staff wellbeing with new wellbeing champions already in place throughout the country.

I note, and welcome, ongoing engagement with all staffside partners on key issues such as the Demand and Capacity programme and rest break compliance. I know that the Partnership Conference took place on the 1st April to continue to develop positive dialogue with Trade Union partners and I encourage you to further build on this. My officials will continue to engage with you as these discussions and positive engagement continues and I will be kept informed accordingly.

In terms of tackling some of these workforce issues, it was great to hear that current recruitment has been very successful, with 549 A&E staff recruited and trained in recent months, and advertised posts continuing to attract good numbers of applicants.

To summarise, we are most grateful for the outstanding efforts of the Service and its staff to be able to adapt and maintain key services during 2020/21 for the benefit of Scotland, in the face of unrelenting pressures.

LOOK FORWARD

Ensuring that the NHS is not overwhelmed remains of paramount importance and, given the myriad of pressures facing us, Boards will remain on an emergency footing until such time as we see these pressures beginning to ease.

It is important that we can ensure a more collaborative approach nationally moving forward and I was pleased to hear from you that there is appetite for this across the system and how digital solutions and innovations can help support these improvements.

One of the key issues for the ambulance service remains hospital turnaround times and it is important we are linking turnaround times to the wider system work around Redesign of Urgent Care and benchmark measures across the system, highlighting the importance of each area and how they impact on one another.

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As previously advised, I welcome this support in building resilience throughout the year, in the face of any potential further COVID variant/waves.

After pausing longer term financial planning in March 2020 in response to Covid-19, NHS Boards are starting to draft 3-year financial plans that will come into effect from 2022-23. We recognise the ongoing financial impact of Covid and associated pressures; alongside the Board's additional staff costs and slippage in delivery of savings. As outlined at our meeting, phase 3 of the Demand and Capacity business case has now been submitted to Scottish Government. Funding requirements are currently being considered as part of the 2022/23 Spending Review and Officials confirm that this risk is being progressed with a final decision by May. The Government will continue to regularly engage with SAS to monitor the financial position and to assist with planning and I welcome the Service's commitment to continue to look at cost savings.

I note that the Service is currently working on its 2020-2030 strategy, focussing on collaboration work with Boards and joined up emergency care, through the Redesign of Urgent Care work and a Three Horizon approach. I'm aware this was originally delayed due to Covid-19 pressures and I look forward to reviewing this in the summer. We also welcome the approach to redevelop South Glasgow Ambulance Station as a community hub and look forward to seeing the plans and proposal for this as it progresses.

As outlined at our meeting, I'd be keen to visit staff over summer recess and will work with my officials to explore potential visit opportunities in both urban and rural areas.

CONCLUSION

I hope that by the time of the next Review we will be free of some of the more extreme recent pressures and able to focus fully on renewal. I am, nonetheless, under no illusion that the NHS has faced the most challenging winter in its history and am grateful for your ongoing efforts to ensure resilience. We will continue to keep performance under close review and to provide as much support as possible.

I want to conclude by reiterating my sincere thanks to the Service and staff for your sustained professionalism and commitment, in the face of unprecedented and unremitting pressures during both 2020/21 and 2021/22, and for setting out such a comprehensive account of your performance this past year.

Yours sincerely



HUMZA YOUSAF

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