



Pauline Howie

<pauline.howie@nhs.scot>

Dear Pauline,

Thank you for all that you and your team at the Scottish Ambulance Service have done in planning for and implementing the remobilisation of the service against our Remobilise, Recover, Redesign Framework.

Our four key priorities for remobilisation are:

1. Ensure the **health, wellbeing and safety** of staff and patients.
2. Reduce harm by ensuring effective **demand management** procedures are in place.
3. Ensure that we have sufficient **workforce capacity** to manage further waves of COVID-19 incidents effectively, on top of existing demand and seasonal pressures.
4. Recover and renew to a better, more **innovative and digitally enabled** sustainable model than the pre-pandemic one.

SAS will play a key role in delivering the above priorities. The specific areas of focus identified for the Scottish Ambulance Service are:

1. Demand management through effective communication with service users including people who call 999, GP's and other healthcare professionals, NHS 24, Police Scotland and other partners;
2. Managing Patient Transport Service capacity as the NHS remobilises and in light of local and national Covid restrictions ;
3. Increasing internal advance practice triage in control centres to optimise response to time critical emergencies and to signpost appropriate patients to self-care or alternative resources. (Work with NHS 24 to strengthen respective clinical hubs);
4. Working with Boards and NHS 24 to strengthen pre emergency department triage for those patients who previously self-presented;
5. Integration with the emerging health board flow navigation centres and strengthening system wide professional to professional networks to support right care right place and achieve improved outcomes;
6. Maintain and strengthen links to Covid hubs and testing infrastructure which will need to be kept in place as we move into a protracted Covid recovery phase;
7. As part of the Redesign of Urgent Care (RUC), further development of access to non-emergency department pathways for patients that you have attended, particularly for patients whose needs are best met by primary or community care partners, including mental health and third sector where appropriate;



8. Sharing of data and intelligence to support wider health planning;
9. Building digital capacity to support all of the above work.

Managing and Maintaining Your Response to Patients

Your response to the COVID pandemic has highlighted your crucial role within the health and social care system, and we note that the redesign of services that you have undertaken has helped to manage a higher proportion of patients safely over the telephone via self-care advice or onward referral. In particular, your response to increased turnaround times at some sites, and the actions that you have taken with assistance from Scottish Government colleagues to help mitigate these are greatly appreciated and are beginning to show some improvement.

We note your objectives in this area, to maintain your ability to respond and scale up using the incident management framework, and to continue to work with Health Board partners to look at what further mitigating actions can be implemented. We will continue to work closely with yourselves and Boards to take this work forward.

Living with COVID-19

We acknowledge all of the efforts of SAS to ensure your staff safety and protection from COVID. Your lateral flow testing and vaccination programmes continue to prioritise the safety of all staff, and we note that you aim to complete the vaccination of your staff during April.

Your work on the Mobile Test Units will continue to provide an essential service in the country's fight against the further spread of the virus throughout 2021. We note the targets set within your remobilisation plan with the ultimate objective of ensuring that your staff are able to operate in a safe environment with sufficient and safe equipment.

Workforce Recovery/Transition

You have made significant progress to date with your 'building better rosters' work stream, which remains a key part of the demand and capacity review work and will ensure that you are working as efficiently as possible with the A&E resources already in place.

Alongside this work stream is the immediate priority to increase workforce capacity in frontline services in line with what ORH modelling carried out as part of your review has informed you and we are committed to continue to support you as this recruitment progresses.

Within this, the health and wellbeing of staff is rightly a priority for SAS, given the impact that COVID has had on everyone on the front line. We acknowledge the tremendous effort of your staff, working at full capacity and beyond throughout the recent months as the pandemic and winter pressures have combined to prove extremely challenging. Sickness levels as a result of the pandemic are challenging, as is morale and the opportunity to allow staff recuperation time. In the face of this, we acknowledge the achievements of SAS to date to help assist with staff health and wellbeing and are encouraged by the creation of your new wellbeing strategy covering 5 key themes to support staff. We look forward to see the positive impact of this strategy as it is implemented.

In addition, we note that your working arrangements have changed substantially in the face of the pandemic, and that some of the ways in which you work will have changed

permanently. We appreciate all the work undertaken to date to align working processes to the new demands which have been placed on the Service.

A further piece of work being undertaken to improve performance and reduce some of the pressure on staff in some of the more rural areas of the country is the ambition to remove on call working at a further four stations in 2021/22. This is again a piece of highly important work which we will continue to fully support.

Whole System Redesign

This is a large area of work, which is significant in your remobilisation plan. Your support for the Redesign of Urgent Care Programme will be hugely significant and we will work closely with you in this area over the coming year.

Working in partnership with healthcare providers in the delivery of improved end of life care is a key focus of SAS and your work on this will help to ensure dignity in death, whilst respecting the wishes of both the patients and their families.

We note all of the significant areas of work within the whole system redesign, and look forward to supporting SAS achieve all of its aims throughout the year in this area.

A significant addition to this year's remobilisation plan is the COP 26 summit in November. Your preparations for such a significant event, whilst meeting your everyday obligations are not underestimated, and we are aware you have been working with a number of Scottish Government colleagues on the detailed planning, training and recruitment for this event. These efforts are hugely appreciated and we will continue to support you on this as we approach November.

Enabling Improvements

There are a number of projects currently ongoing within SAS to expand or replace the existing capacities, and we note the progress to date and the further development of these throughout the year, with the overall outcome to support the service improvements and system redesigns with the appropriate digital solutions.

Your strong relationships with the Boards and the use of data and intelligence sharing will help measure the impact of change in delivering frontline services. Your objective to further improve your capabilities in producing workforce data will help to improve the design and delivery of services across Scotland.

Communication & Engagement

We note the increase in communications and engagement with your workforce, which includes weekly emails and a new intranet system. We also note your overall outcome in this area, to ensure that all key stakeholders are fully engaged in co-designing the future direction of the Service, and we are pleased to offer our assistance in this area where necessary.

Key Performance/ Delivery Indicators

We are aware that plans to look into alternative performance targets which are better suited to SAS current service model and more aligned to patient outcomes had to be put on hold

due to COVID-19, but we are committed to resuming these discussions as we move into the summer.

Finance

We have reviewed your financial plan for 2021/22 and provided detailed feedback on 15/03/2021. We note your financial plan shows a breakeven position for 2021/22 assuming £15.4 million of savings can be met (5.3% of baseline). However there continues to be significant uncertainty about the financial impact of Covid in both the short and longer-term, and what this will mean both for service delivery and associated financial plans.

As in 2020-21, we will therefore look to assess progress against your plan through the formal Quarter 1 review process, when the in-year Covid funding and costs will be clearer. As part of this review we will look for an update as to the revised financial projections for 2021-22 and the progress the Board has made in taking forward savings plans. Further details around the Quarter 1 review process will be provided to NHS Directors of Finance in the coming weeks.

In the interim we expect that the Board continue to develop sufficient– as far as possible– recurring savings options to meet the financial challenge outlined in your financial plan.

As previously indicated, we aim to return to three year financial planning and the next steps on this will be detailed in due course. The timing of this will however depend on the impact of Covid over the coming year.

Plan Approval and Feedback

Given that the Sponsorship team has already given you early feedback on this, we are content to approve your plan. Your finalised and signed off plan will be used as the basis for engagement with the Board over the coming year. Feedback has been and will continue to be provided to you by the Sponsorship team within the Health & Social Care Directorates, as normal. It is vital that this feedback should be taken on board as you move into the implementation phase of your plan.

Publication

We are aware that your Board will need to complete its internal governance processes to approve your finalised plan, incorporating any developments or amendments made to take account of feedback received in the interim, will be published together with this letter in due course. Given the strict requirements in place at this time, we would ask that while we remain in the pre-election period both your plan and the content of this letter are kept out of the public domain, with publication to take place immediately after the election.

Next Steps

It is our intention to revisit Remobilisation Plans for all Boards later in the year once the position on Covid-19 and related matters is clearer, and planning assumptions used in your existing drafts have been validated or amended. As such, we may commission a further iteration of your plan later in the year, taking account of the foregoing and offering the

opportunity for us to update guidance on key areas; this will also be informed by any additional or amended priorities in respect of incoming Ministers.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Yvonne Summers, Head of Operational Planning in the first instance (Yvonne.summers@gov.scot).

In the meantime I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, your Board and your entire workforce again for your, and their ongoing extraordinary efforts. Your contribution not just to the nation's response to Covid-19 but to all health & care needs of the population are hugely appreciated by everyone at the Scottish Government.

Yours sincerely,



AIDAN GRISEWOOD
Interim Director