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30 July 2019

Dear Pauline,

Thank you for submitting your Annual Operational Plan (AOP), setting out your operational priorities and key actions for 2019/20. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for all the hard work that has gone into the preparation of the AOP over the last few months.

As detailed in the guidance we issued in February 2019, the AOP is intended to support NHS Boards and their partners to deliver safe, effective and accessible treatment and care, and provides the basis on which the Scottish Government will hold Boards to account for their contribution over the year to delivering the Cabinet Secretary's priorities including waiting times improvement; investment in mental health; and achieving greater progress and pace in the integration of Health and Social Care.

We are happy to sign off the Scottish Ambulance Service Annual Operational Plan for this year and hope that the following comments will be helpful as your plan is taken forward.

As a Special Board operating an essential frontline service you have an important role to play in helping to support a number of SG priorities. Alongside continued development of your clinical response model and improvements to patient care, your plan presents a clear focus for this year on taking forward work in a number of these priority areas including waiting times improvement, support for mental health, health and social care integration and also primary care sustainability. As ever, close engagement with key partners such as Health and Social Care partnerships, Health Boards and NHS 24 will be essential in driving this work forward.

Performance:

The evaluation of the Service's new clinical response model, published this year, evidenced significant improvements in the triage and response to patients with immediately life threatening conditions with almost 1200 additional lives saved since the new model was introduced. The evaluation also highlighted a requirement to make improvements in response to lower acuity patients and we are aware that a lot of work has already been

undertaken in this area. Your plan details your intention to continue to develop your response model and increase the benefits to patients throughout 2019/20. Alongside this we are aware of the extensive patient engagement you are carrying out to promote the benefits of the new model and the outcome of this engagement will be important in supporting potential developments of your performance monitoring framework with a stronger patient outcomes focus.

Workforce:

Your plan outlines the work throughout the year to review your demand and capacity. This review will help the Service to work as efficiently as possible within existing resources as well as identifying future requirements in terms of both staffing and resource. The sponsor team will continue to be fully engaged in this work as it develops through the review steering group. Your plan also details work to be undertaken in year to continue to develop all your staff and also introduce paramedic prescribing. All of this work is essential as the Service continues to develop its offer in support of primary care. In addition you highlighted increased collaboration with Police Scotland, NHS 24 and health and social care partners to improve the experience for patients experiencing mental health conditions which, as you are aware, is a key priority for the Cabinet Secretary and we will be interested to hear about progress with this over the course of the year.

Finance:

Your financial plan sets out an indicative breakeven position in each year of the three year planning cycle to 2021-22, along with detail of your planning assumptions and approach. We are content to approve the plan, with the expectation that the Board delivers breakeven in 2019-20. We will use the three-year finance plan as the basis of our discussions with you throughout 2019-20 and into future years.

Plans for the £15 million National Boards' efficiency savings were scheduled to be fully developed in collaboration with your National Board partners by the end of June 2019. We expect this to include any adjustment to the baseline position for 2019-20 as well as allocation of the shortfall from 2018-19. It is therefore essential that planning assumptions are aligned across National Boards and with the approach agreed by the National Boards' Directors of Finance Group.

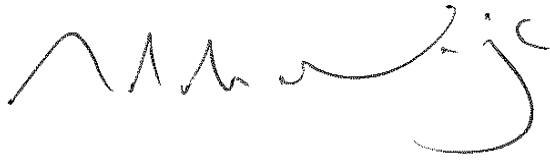
In view of this, following the first quarter of the financial year, we have asked for an update on the Boards financial position, including progress in the identification and delivery of savings. Guidance has been issued to your Director of Finance and we look forward to receiving your update.

Conclusion:

As previously stated, the finalised AOP will be used as the basis for engagement with the Board over the coming year and we look forward to working with you to deliver ongoing improvement of safe and accessible treatment and care. We are particularly interested in hearing about progress on the ambitious actions around workforce and the developing Clinical Response Model. These have the potential to transform how services are delivered often in a challenging environment.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Fergus Millan in the Community Health and Social Care Directorate in the first instance (fergus.millan@gov.scot).

Yours sincerely,



Malcolm Wright
Director-General for Health & Social Care and Chief Executive of NHSScotland