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Dear David and Karen,

NHS EDUCATION FOR SCOTLAND ANNUAL REVIEW: 15 NOVEMBER 2024

My thanks for you both and everyone from NHS Education for Scotland (NES) involved in the preparations for your Board's Annual Review in Edinburgh on 15 November 2024. I found it an informative day and it was good to meet with everyone. I was supported by John Burns, Chief Operating Officer for NHS Scotland, and my officials within the sponsor team. The focus of the day was people, partnership and performance, and this letter summarises the key discussion points.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S PRESENTATION

The session began with your presentation on the Boards's key achievements and reflections during 2023/24 in accordance with the NES corporate strategy 2023-26 and the organisation's transformation plan.

I noted that NES have supported training for over 17,000 learners, ensuring they are well-equipped and resilient health and social care workforce. The TURAS platform plays an important part in improving access to information and it was encouraging to learn that around 4.2 million accesses to learning products and approximately 750,000 monthly accesses and it is a vital resource for over 450,000 users across health, social care, public and third sector organisations.

I particularly appreciated the chance to hear the range of commissions from the Scottish Government, which supports the achievement of Ministerial priorities and policy ambitions.

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FINANCE

Despite the increasing challenges with finance, I am pleased to note that you are on track to deliver a balanced position for 2023/24. I was pleased to hear that the Board are working hard to achieving key financial target, and implementing critical cost-saving measures for 2023/24 as far as possible, ensuring that you continue to meet and exceed your strategic objectives while adapting to the evolving fiscal environment. We will continue to support you as best as we can as you look to reduce the deficit further as we move towards the end of the financial year.

As we move forward to 2024/25 financial year, we will continue to work closely with all NHS Boards, including NES, to address the financial pressures facing the system, whilst ensuring that the NHS workforce remains the key priority.

STRATEGY

In terms of NES's responsibilities across health and social care, the third sector, and the wider public sector, I was delighted to hear about the many opportunities you outlined to deliver its statutory responsibility for workforce development, education and training and data and digital.

WORKFORCE

I would like to formally record my appreciation to all NES staff for their consistent dedication and commitment, and to give them assurance that we will continue to do what we can to support them.

It was encouraging to hear NES continue to support its workforce and has a staff retention rate of 93.3%, and sickness absence rate was maintained at 2.6%.

It was positive to note that during 2023/24, NES demonstrated significant strategic growth by expanding its workforce and undertaking numerous new commissions from the Scottish Government with its staffing numbers being at over 3,000. Which 1,974 of these are doctors and dentist in training, and 1,207 are education and support staff.

CONCLUSION

I am pleased by the progress you have made in 2023/24 and recognise the challenges you have overcome, However, the NHS continues to face one of the most difficult periods in history. It will be important to focus and respond to the tough financial landscape we will face this year.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my sincere thanks to all NES staff and their sustained professionalism and commitment.

Finally, I encourage you to continue to work closely with the sponsor team in the next review period, and to maintain the sharing of information about organisational performance, as this is an important relationship with ensures the Scottish Government can provide as much support to you as possible. I shall be interested to see how the organisation continues to develop in 2025.

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I would like to thank you for your letter of 29 November regarding following up points and attachments on recruitment and retention in the psychology workforce and accelerated development of the social care workforce. My officials will respond to you in due course.

Yours sincerely



MAREE TODD

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