Do you trust NHS Boards to make decisions that are in the best interests of the public?

Trust is important in ensuring the public are satisfied with the way in which an NHS Board is governed and how it takes its decisions. All Boards should adhere to the applicable principles outlined in the UK Corporate Governance Code. These are in relation to leadership, effectiveness, accountability and relations with stakeholders. Trust should be honoured by the publication of a true report of the decisions taken by the Board and the holding of open meetings. Boards should be encouraged to do more to make their Board meetings accessible to the public.

At NSS, we publish all our Board papers and hold open Board meetings (which the public are entitled to attend). The link to our published Board papers is: https://nhsnss.org/how-nss-works/our-board/board-meetings/. We also hold public engagement meetings and an Annual Review which is open to the public. Despite being a non-patient facing health board we attract public attendance to our annual review. This always adds context and ensures we are held to the highest standards.

Are NHS board decisions open and transparent?

Trust should be honoured by the publication of a true report of the decisions taken by the Board and the holding of open meetings, including ensuring their minutes are written in plain English and are provided in a variety of formats.

Please see the above link to NSS’s published papers. As demonstrated in the papers linked above, NSS seeks to produce documentation that informs or reports on decision making in clear, transparent language. To assist with our planning, we review documentation issued by our colleague boards which sufficiently detail their decision with enough clarity that we are able to contribute to debate and inform decision making as well as prepare to support services accordingly.

How accountable do you feel NHS boards are?

NHS Boards should consider a true and accurate reflection of the organisation’s financial position as well as considering, at frequent intervals, the principal strategic and reputational risks in relation to that Board. This should be able to be demonstrated by the publicly available Board papers. Further each Board should have an established and reputable system of internal and external audit in place to ensure internal controls are sufficient.

At NSS, as well as a system of internal controls, we are audited annually by Audit Scotland, who publish an independent report on our position. This report reflects the accountability demonstrated by the Board and Executive team. Quarterly performance meetings with our Scottish Government Sponsor all help to assure NSS is held to account for its decisions.

How effective are NHS boards at delivering health services and improving the health of their population?

NSS is effective at delivering services as demonstrated by our performance in relation to our Local Delivery Plan and as highlighted at our Annual Review (https://nhsnss.org/blog-
Unlike many of the territorial health boards, NSS does not have the unrestricted demand of patients entering our facilities daily. However, part of our service is the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service who work with donors and high levels of demand for blood, while maintaining safe and effective delivery of the service.

Using our management information on our services, we can plan with more clarity of demand which leads to a high performing operation. This is evidenced through our internal and external auditors as well as our publicly accessible annual review. Success is measured against our Local Delivery Plan, the contract between NSS and our Scottish Government Sponsors. Last year’s evidence (https://nhsnss.org/media/2379/local-delivery-plan-2017.pdf) highlights our continued success. Performance measures set by Government should be carefully considered in order that they are measuring meaningful performance targets.