

Carole Wilkinson, Chair, Healthcare Improvement Scotland
Robbie Pearson, Chief Executive, Healthcare Improvement Scotland

6 January 2025

Dear Carole and Robbie,

Thank you for hosting the Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) Annual Review on 20 November 2024 which I was pleased to be a part of.

The event highlighted HIS' broad impact across Scotland's healthcare services; the important influence HIS has on achieving sustainable improvement and support to our healthcare services in delivering safe, effective person-centred care in Scotland; and the valuable leadership and change management support which has implemented tangible improvement. These elements are embedded within all that HIS does and will continue to shape services in the future.

In your presentations, you highlighted key pieces of work such as Hospital @ Home, Right Decision Service toolkits, and the Quality Framework for Community Engagement & Participation; and upcoming priorities such as inspections of Maternity units, the expansion of the Quality Management System (QMS) approach and the Scottish Approach to Change as we look to 25/26. Within these, you highlighted current and anticipated challenges such as the external review of the Responding To Concerns process; the challenge of broad engagement across the various professions involved within Maternity safety in taking a multidisciplinary approach; and the need to ensure the continued evolution of evidence in a fast-moving landscape. You are approaching these in a pragmatic matter, with a focus on getting it right for the people of Scotland. We both reflected on the positive sponsorship relationship between HIS and the Scottish Government and I would expect risks and challenges - anticipated or otherwise - to continue to be highlighted through existing sponsorship structures at the earliest opportunity so that we can support or escalate as needed.

Within my opening remarks I highlighted the continued HIS successes with the Scottish Patient Safety Programme, Hospital @ Home, the Citizens' Panel, collaborative work on frailty and the robust process HIS has supported around service change. These programmes support better outcomes for people across Scotland.

As required by the Annual Review structure, the event included the opportunity to probe you and your Executive Team. I asked questions on i) how you will work across the NHS to embed change in your approach to evidence; ii) handling of major service change brought by the new maternity inspection programme; iii) how HIS will achieve sustained financial

balance and iv) the opportunities and challenges you expect in 2025/26. I was pleased to see the selection of Frances Dodd of NHS Forth Valley to be your Guest Reviewer who asked about HIS' role in ensuring a robust horizon scanning function, stakeholder engagement within the design of programmes and the production and dissemination of data to drive improvements in the delivery and safety of care. You were asked important questions by your Partnership Forum on staffing matters. Time didn't allow but I had also intended asking about HIS' current iMatter Health and Social Care Staff Experience Survey results. I understand that this issue has since been picked up through our sponsorship function.

Lastly, it was unfortunate that questions from the public could not be answered during the event due to lack of time, however, I am pleased to see that written responses to the questions which went unanswered have now been published on your website.

Please take this letter as confirmation that the 2023-24 review period has now concluded.

I look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Burns". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

John Burns, Chief Operating Officer