

Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee

Invitation to give evidence - 19 January 2021

“An update on the performance and progress of Highland’s Health and Social Care Partnership”

NHS Highland and Highland Council entered into a Partnership Agreement in 2012, establishing the principle of service integration in relation to both children’s services and adult social care services and setting up the lead agency model. The Partnership Agreement remains in place.

In 2014, legislation resulted in the development of the Integration Scheme which was submitted to the Scottish Government for approval and represents the current working agreement between NHS Highland and Highland Council with the Partnership Agreement remaining in place to offer detailed guidance.

Whilst the Partnership Agreement remains in place, the Integration Scheme however is governed by legislation and requires to be reviewed. Given the Integration Scheme was submitted to the Scottish Government for approval in June 2015, the revised scheme following the 5 year review period, was required to be submitted by 25 June 2020 in accordance with the legislation as the operative date is the date of the approval of the previous scheme by the Scottish Government.

At the time of the pandemic outbreak, work was being carried out in terms of the documents governing the partnership arrangements.

The pandemic response has necessarily delayed progression of this area of work, as recognised by the Scottish Government in enabling an extension to current integration arrangements.

The requirements of NHS Highland and Highland Council to ensure a legally valid agreement remains in place, have been fulfilled. The communications to Scottish Government confirmed that both partner agencies have carried out an initial review and had jointly agreed that detailed revisions are required. These communications noted that work would continue in due course, which would be submitted to the Scottish Government in terms of any revised timescale which may be issued. The expectation of both parties was that a revised agreement should be in place within the next 6 months.

Further, the communication confirmed the joint commitment of the partnership to carrying out a more detailed review of the scheme which is currently in place. It was also accepted that the financial position is challenging and would be amplified by the challenges presented in managing the pandemic.

A number of actions had been agreed prior to the pandemic with a view to driving change in terms of both the financial position and the outcomes for Highland’s communities. Those actions are being taken forward through the establishment of a Project Management Board to drive and oversee transformational change.

In order to fulfil the review of the integration scheme as required, the necessary key actions going forward are as follows:

- Work is ongoing in terms of the successor scheme required to articulate the agreement, which requires to be in place between NHS Highland and Highland Council. This work will complete with in the 2020/21 financial year, ready for the new financial year. One of the significant areas to be addressed within these arrangements is an updated financial governance section to address the current funding mechanism and areas of financial risk.
- The Joint Monitoring Committee has received an update to reflect the above and is content with the direction of travel.
- A timeline for approval is in place to ensure the revised timescale is complied with.