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Convenors
Public Audit Committee
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

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23 November 2022

Dear Convenor,

Copy to: Auditor General, Audit Scotland

NHS Forth Valley: Stage 4 Escalation for Governance, Leadership and Culture

I am writing to the Committee in relation to the escalated position of NHS Forth Valley on the NHS Board Performance Escalation Framework.

In April 2022, Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) conducted two unannounced inspections in NHS Forth Valley. Following the second inspection, HIS escalated their concerns to the Chief Executive of NHS Forth Valley, requesting assurances on the improvement actions that would be taken to address these concerns. Sufficient assurances have not been received from NHS Forth Valley.

In May 2022, the National Planning and Performance Oversight Group (NPPOG) met to consider the issues raised by HIS after their April inspections. Senior officials noted other performance concerns relating to NHS Forth Valley across a range of areas, including unscheduled care, out of hours (OOH) services, mental health, integration, and governance, leadership and culture.

The Chief Operating Officer for NHS Scotland, John Burns, as the Chair of the group, engaged with NHS Forth Valley during the course of the summer. This engagement and ongoing support has been crucial in providing the Board Leadership with the time and space to take responsibility for change within their own organisation.

A third unannounced HIS inspection was undertaken on 27-28 September. This follow-up inspection demonstrated some deterioration in performance following the previous two inspections.

NPPOG convened for a special meeting on 26 October 2022. Members noted that the situation in NHS Forth Valley was of continuing concern and re-convened on 11 November 2022.

Escalation is a last resort, and a decision we have had to take following a consistent demonstration that the NHS Forth Valley leadership team has been unable to follow through with the transformational change required without additional formal support and monitoring.

I, supported by Health and Social Care Management Board (HSCMB), agreed to escalate NHS Forth Valley on this basis. NHS Forth Valley is now escalated to Stage 4 for Governance, Leadership and Culture, bringing direct formal oversight and coordinated engagement from Scottish Government (SG) in the form of an Assurance Board, chaired by Christine McLaughlin, Director of Population Health.

I have informed Cathie Cowan, Chief Executive of NHS Forth Valley, of my decision and the Scottish Government website has been updated to reflect these changes.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lamb