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Dear Convenor,

PUBLICATION OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF AUDIOLOGY SERVICES IN SCOTLAND – FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I am writing to inform you that the Independent Review of Audiology Services in Scotland has published its' final report and recommendations today, Friday 25 August 2023. The report can be accessed via the Scottish Government website at the following link: [Independent Review of Audiology Services in Scotland](#).

At the end of 2021 a report was published by the British Academy of Audiology, following an Independent Review into the Paediatric Audiology Service at NHS Lothian. It found failures that ultimately led to some babies and children being undiagnosed or significantly delayed in diagnosis and treatment.

In response, NHS Lothian were escalated to Stage 3 of the 'Board Performance Escalation Framework' for Audiology performance and service delivery – demonstrating how seriously the Scottish Government took the situation in NHS Lothian. This step was to ensure that the necessary improvements were made to the service, with a formal recovery plan being developed by the board, in partnership with the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government also announced this National Independent Review, in direct response to events in NHS Lothian's Paediatric Audiology Services. In doing so, our aim was as clear then as it is now – to ensure such events would not take place again, anywhere in Scotland.

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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The circumstances within which this National Independent Review was first commissioned were extremely difficult, and we fully acknowledge the long-term impact that the failures which were identified, have had on many children, young people and their families.

It is absolutely right to acknowledge and reflect on what went wrong, and the impact that that has had. However, it is equally important to acknowledge that the publication of this report now represents an opportunity to redefine audiology services in Scotland, and improve how they are delivered. It is vital that we take the opportunity to learn from the mistakes that have been made in the past and shape a better future for audiology.

The findings of the Independent Review, point primarily to the need for cultural change in services, with a focus on patient-centred care which listens to patients, empowers them and places them at the heart of their coordinated, multidisciplinary care. This sits alongside recommendations around how improvements can be made in respect of areas such as governance and structure, education and leadership.

I would like to give you the assurance that the Scottish Government will now consider this report and the recommendations in full, and will come back to Parliament in due course to outline the steps that we will take.

Whilst we need to take the time to consider the full range of recommendations that have been presented in this final report, I would like to make it clear that the Scottish Government has not stood by on beginning to take action already.

I have written to NHS Board Chairs today, to reiterate the Scottish Government's expectations around the requirement for robust governance structures to be in place with regards to clinical services. In this letter I sought specific assurances from them, that they are satisfied of the clinical safety of audiology services in their respective Boards.

The message around robust governance and safety, is consistent with that which has been communicated by the Scottish Government's Chief Scientific Officer to senior leadership within territorial Health Boards over the course of this summer. In these meetings the Scottish Government's expectations were made clear, that Boards should be prepared to respond to the recommendations when they are published, but that action should be taken, where possible, before recommendations are published if they have identified any areas for improvement through their internal governance processes.

Sustained and robust engagement with Health Boards and other stakeholders will continue, as we move forward into considering how we will address the recommendations in full, and I look forward to being able to provide you with an update on our intentions, in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Jenni Minto MSP

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