The role of boards
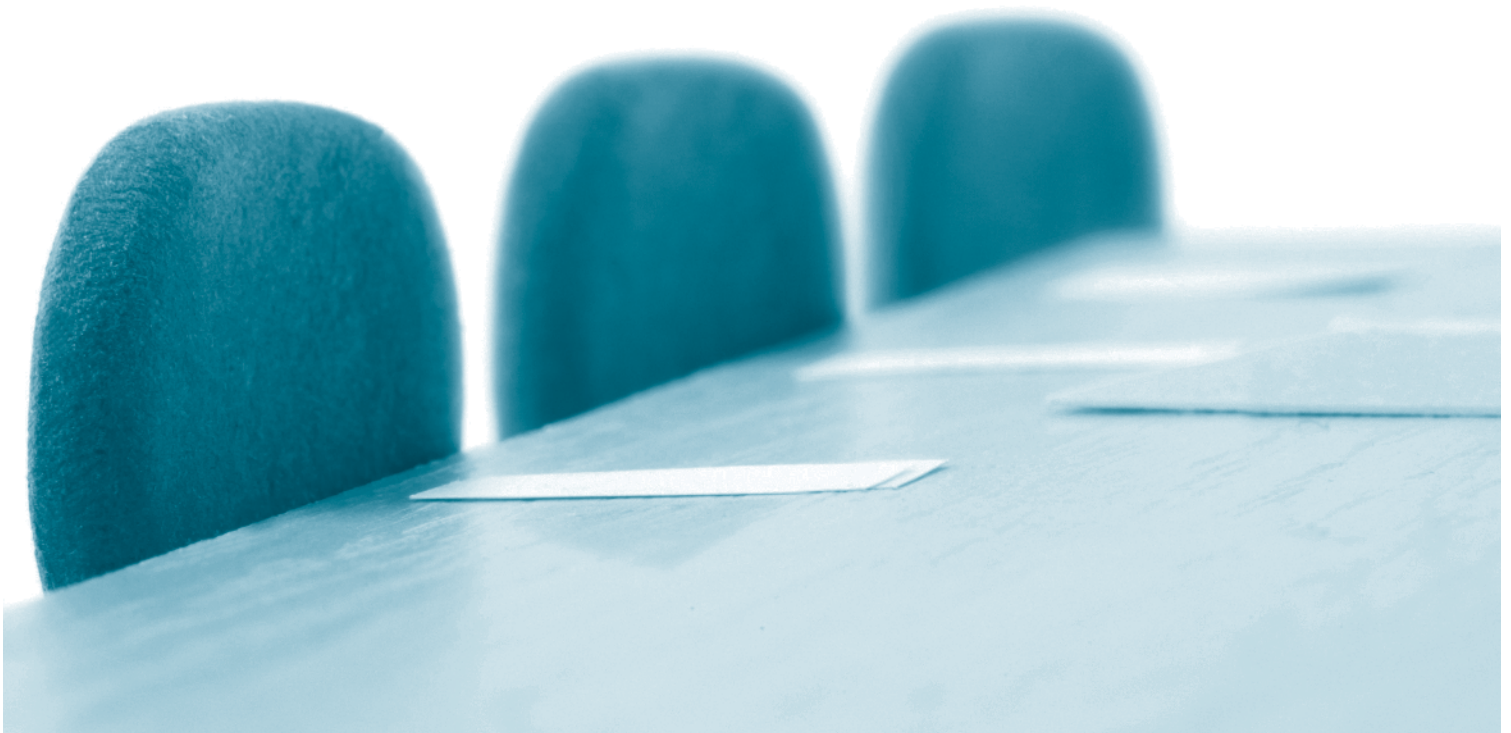
Findings from a survey of board members of public bodies in Scotland

AUDIT SCOTLAND

Auditor General for Scotland

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Contents

Summary

1. This supplement accompanies Audit Scotland's report *The Role of Boards* and summarises the results of our survey of all board members. The survey was carried out by George Street Research on Audit Scotland's behalf during the summer and autumn of 2009.

2. All 106 public bodies covered in this report agreed to take part and questionnaires were dispatched to 105 boards (two executive NDPBs, the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, share a joint board). In total, 1527 hard copy questionnaires were dispatched to boards which varied in size from four to 32 members with an average board size of 14 members. Members were given the opportunity to complete the survey online if they preferred.

3. At least 48% of members from each board type responded and just over half of the total number returned a completed questionnaire. Almost three-quarters of those who responded were non-executive members. The majority of those responding had been in post for over a year.

4. The majority of members responding were male, over 50, Scottish, heterosexual, employed and earning over £25,000. A very small number described themselves as disabled or gave their ethnicity as black minority ethnic.

Objectives and methodology

5. We used a range of methods during this audit and a key strand was a survey of all the board members in the 106 organisations included in the study. The survey collected data that contribute towards meeting many of the study objectives, including:

    o   demographic information

    o   views on roles and responsibilities of board members

    o   skills and expertise possessed by board members

    o   views on whether the boards demonstrate openness and integrity

    o   views on how the boards are providing effective leadership, accountability and decision making

6. This was a census survey of all board members in all the bodies covered by the study. There are 29 executive NDPBs, 23 NHS bodies, 11 executive agencies, 3 non-ministerial departments and Scottish Water, as well as 39 colleges; 106 in total. They are listed at Appendix 1.

7. Each board member received a two part self completion questionnaire; this had been drafted and piloted by the Audit Scotland study team with George Street Research providing expert advice on specific question wording, format and order for the final questionnaires. One part covered sensitive and personal demographic information and the other asked for opinions on a range of questions on the role of boards.

8. Just over half (51%) returned a completed questionnaire; 7% of those completing a questionnaire did so online. A methodology appendix is provided in Appendix 2.

Summary of key findings

9. On the whole, responses reflected fairly positive views from members of boards in terms of their boards' role, effectiveness and operation:

    o   Only a very small number had no understanding of their role before joining the board and the majority of those in post believe they fully understand their role.

    o   The majority saw the appointment process, in terms of appointing members with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed on their board, as effective or highly effective.

    o   Almost all had an understanding of issues concerning interests and whether/how they should be declared.

    o   While almost 60 per cent are not paid for their role, three-quarters of these members do not think a payment should be made.

    o   The majority received an induction; over half of these had a formal induction and most agreed their induction had offered them a range of necessary understanding, information and opportunities.

    o   Most said they had opportunities to consider and address any training and development needs.

    o   Most chairs reported that they have reviewed the overall mix of skills and expertise on their board in the last year. The majority of members felt that their board has the right mix; over half of those who said it did not say their board is working towards addressing this.

    o   Around three-quarters of respondents have their performance assessed; over half of these assessments are done by the chair and most produced positive outcomes; identification of training and development needs was the least effective outcome of these.

    o   A very small number are not confident of succession plans for their board.

    o   Most thought committees/subcommittees are effective or highly effective in supporting the work of their board.

    o   The majority report their boards have reviewed their methods of operation in the last year.

    o   The majority feel their boards hold the right number of meetings and that these are about the right length. In relation to restricted attendance, the majority felt this was always or usually appropriate.

    o   The majority were positive about their opportunities and abilities to participate.

    o   The majority had positive views on the information provided to them.

    o   Views on how boards operate together were positive.

    o   Views on relationships within boards were positive.

    o   Views on relationships between boards and stakeholders were positive and almost one in five members identified some form of interaction with stakeholders as an important role for their board.

o   The majority of members felt their boards were performing well in the roles listed and most felt their board has a shared view of its roles and responsibilities all or most of the time.

Challenges identified

10. The findings point to a few challenges for the future operation of boards.

Time

11. On average board members spend just over 10 days more than they had expected on board business. The main barrier to membership was identified as the time commitment needed.

12. Chairs spend the highest number of extra days on their role than expected and half see time commitment as the main barrier.

13. Almost half of college board members saw time as a barrier to membership although college members report spending the least number of days on board business.

Induction and training

14. Over three quarters of board members had received an induction of some form. Almost a third of those who had received an induction felt it had helped them understand their role. A fifth who had had an induction mentioned on-the-board experience as being helpful to them in understanding their role. A fifth of those who had not received an induction also said this.

15. Chairs and chief executives were most likely to say that experience on previous boards had been useful in helping them understand their role. Only around one in ten mentioned their induction; chairs were least likely to have received an induction.

16. NDPB and Scottish Water members were most likely to have received an induction. However, the number saying that their induction had helped them understand their role was only slightly higher than those identifying 'on the board experience' as helpful in this regard.

17. The majority of chairs do not receive specific training to support them in their role and almost half do not feel their performance assessments identify areas where they need training or development.

Role of the board

18. For each of the list of roles given in the questionnaire, more members felt their board should play a lead role than believed their board actually plays a lead role. The biggest difference between the two was in the role of 'challenging and scrutinising the organisation's senior managers'. The majority of members did, however, feel that their boards were performing well in each of these roles.

Main findings

Demographic profile of respondents

19. For analysis purposes boards were grouped as shown in Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2

Survey returns

Fifty-one per cent of board members returned completed surveys

	Number of boards	Number of members	Surveys returned	% return
NDPBs and Scottish Water	29	354	197	56
NHS bodies	23	428	212	50
Executive agencies and non-ministerial departments	14	130	70	54
Colleges	39	615	298	48
TOTAL	**105**	**1527**	**777**	**51**

Source: Audit Scotland

20. Respondents were asked their type of board role and how long they had been in their current role (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3

Board roles and time in role

Seventy-three per cent of respondents were non-executives

	Total (%)	Exec NDPBs /pub corps (%)	NHS bodies (%)	Exec agencies /NMDs (%)	Colleges (%)
Board Role					
Chair	9	9	8	10	11
Chief exec	5	4	6	1	6
Exec member	12	3	26	40	1

Non-exec member	73	84	60	47	82
Not given	<1	-	<1	1	-
Time in role:					
Less than 1 year	16	12	13	20	20
1 to 3 years	42	46	37	50	40
4 to 6 years	25	22	30	21	24
Over 6 years	17	20	19	9	15
Not given	<1	-	1	-	1

Source: Audit Scotland

21. The respondent profile from the 750 respondents is shown in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4

Respondent profile

Seventy-four per cent of respondents were over 50.

	Total (%)		Total (%)
Age:		**Council area:**	
19 or younger	<1	Aberdeen City	2
20 to 29	<1	Aberdeenshire	3
30 to 39	3	Angus	1
40 to 49	21	Argyll & Bute	2
50 to 59	41	Clackmannanshire	1
60 to 69	31	Dumfries & Galloway	5
70 to 79	2	Dundee City	2
No reply	1	East Ayrshire	1
		East Dunbartonshire	3
Gender:		East Lothian	3
Male	67	East Renfrewshire	2
Female	32	Edinburgh, City of	16
None of these	<1	Eilean Siar	2

No reply	1	Falkirk	1

Sexual orientation:	
Bisexual	2
Gay man	1
Gay woman / lesbian	0
Heterosexual / straight	91
None of these	1
Prefer not to say	3
No reply	2

Consider themselves disabled:	
Yes	3
No	95
No reply	2

Ethnic group:	
Scottish	75
Irish	<1
Other British	22
Indian	1
Pakistani	<1
Chinese	<1
African	<1
Any other white	1
Any other black	<1
Any mixed background	<1
No reply	1

Falkirk	1
Fife	7
Glasgow City	8
Highland	6
Inverclyde	1
Midlothian	2
Moray	1
North Ayrshire	2
North Lanarkshire	2
Orkney Islands	1
Perth & Kinross	3
Renfrewshire	2
Scottish Borders	4
Shetland Islands	1
South Ayrshire	4
South Lanarkshire	3
Stirling	3
West Dunbartonshire	1
West Lothian	2
None of these	<1
No reply	2

Employment:	
Full time	47
Part time	10
Self employed	19
Unemployed	<1
Retired	20
Student (not employed)	<1

Religion or belief:				
None	36		Looking after family	2
Church of Scotland	35		Other	1
Roman Catholic	9		No reply	1
Other Christian	12		**Income:**	
Buddhist	<1		Up to £10,000	4
Hindu	<1		£10,001 to £25,000	12
Muslim	<1		£25,001 to £50,000	34
Jewish	<1		£50,001 to £75,000	19
Sikh	<1		£75,001 to £100,000	11
Another religion or belief	2		£100,001 to £125,000	5
No reply	4		£125,001 to £150,000	3
			More than £150,000	3
			Refused	1
			No reply	7

Note: The base was the 750 people who responded to the diversity section of the survey.

Source: Audit Scotland

22. The majority of board members (74 per cent) gave their age as over 50 while only 26 (3.5 per cent) of the 750 members who completed the diversity section were under 40. Of the people who responded:

- o 67 per cent are male.

- o 91 per cent are heterosexual.

- o three per cent are disabled.

- o 16 per cent live in the City of Edinburgh local authority area (next highest – Glasgow City with eight per cent).

- o 75 per cent are Scottish; 22 per cent other British; 11 (1.5 per cent) are BME.

- o 36 per cent have no religion or belief; 35 per cent are Church of Scotland; 22 (three per cent) gave their religion as Buddhist / Hindu / Muslim / Jewish / Sikh or other.

- o 76 per cent are employed (full-time, part-time of self employed); 20 per cent are retired.

- o 34 per cent earn between £25k and £50k; 41 per cent earn over £50k.

# Views on roles and responsibilities of board members

Time commitment

23. Board members reported spending an average of just over 10 days per year more on board business than they had expected and this rose to almost 22 days more for board chairs. Only chief executives reported that their average days per year spent on board business were less than they had expected (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5

Time committed against time spent on board business

Chairs and other non-executives spent longer on board business than expected
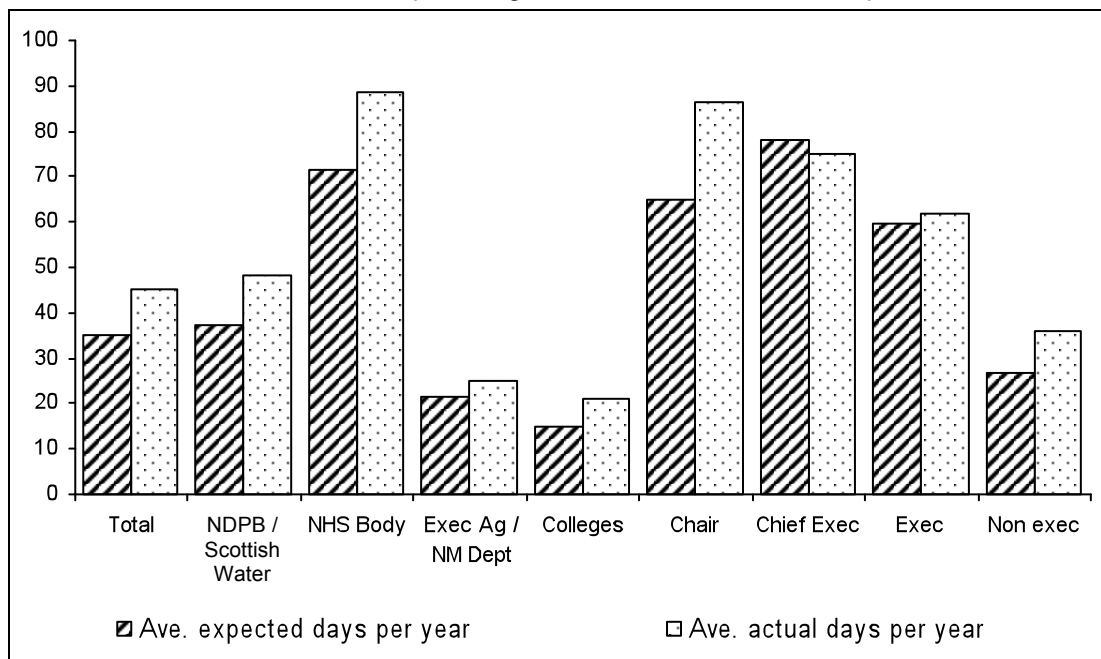
Source: Audit Scotland

24. While members in all types of boards said they spend more time than expected, this was greatest among NHS bodies whose members spend an average of around 17 days per year more than expected on board business. Only six per cent of the 777 board members who responded said that board business accounts for less time than expected.

Declaring interests

25. Across all types of boards and board members, almost all respondents said that they knew how to:

   o   find out what interests you need to declare as a board member (99 per cent)

   o   declare any interests (98 per cent)

   o   manage any interests when conducting board business, e.g. during board meetings (96 per cent).

Payment

26. The percentage of board members receiving payment for their role on boards varies depending on board types and board members.

27. The 447 respondents who are not paid were asked whether they thought their board role should be paid. Only a quarter thought it should be. This figure was lowest amongst executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (five per cent thought the position should be paid) and chief executives (three per cent) and highest amongst colleges (30 per cent) and board chairs (34 per cent).

Motivation for becoming a board member

28. The main motivations mentioned for joining a board were the opportunity to contribute and having an interest in the board or organisation (29 per cent each), having an interest in the board's subject area (28 per cent) and as an opportunity to enhance careers, improve knowledge, experience or skills (27 per cent).

Understanding their roles

29. Only three per cent of respondents had no understanding of what their role might be before joining the board. Eighty-one per cent of board members say they now fully understand their role.

30. Twenty-one per cent of members mentioned 'on the board experience' was useful in helping them understand their role as a board member and 20 per cent said an induction process or programme within the organisation had been useful.

31. The most common answer from both chairs (25 per cent) and chief executives (27 per cent) was that their experience on previous boards was useful in helping them understand their role. This was also the main answer given by members of NDPBs and Scottish Water boards (24 per cent).

Participation

32. The 644 non-executive respondents were asked a series of questions on their participation. There were no notable differences in opinion; the majority agreed that they feel able to:

   o   Express views openly at board meetings (96 per cent)

   o   Ask questions when they need more information or don't understand (97 per cent)

   o   Challenge the chair if needed (92 per cent)

   o   Challenge the chief executive if needed (95 per cent)

   o   Challenge executive members or senior managers if needed (95 per cent)

   o   Influence the work of executive members or senior managers (87 per cent)

   o   Provide support and guidance to senior management (89 per cent).

Skills and expertise possessed by board members

Induction

33. Seventy-seven per cent of members who had joined their board in the last three years had received some form of induction; this figure was lower for board chairs (45 per cent). The figure was highest amongst board members from NDPBs and Scottish Water (86 per cent).

34. Of the 380 respondents who had received an induction, 52 per cent said this was based on a formal programme; again this figure was lowest amongst chairs (27 per cent). Thirty-eight percent of respondents said their induction was casual or ad hoc; this was highest amongst NHS board members (51 per cent) and lowest amongst chief executives (23 per cent).

35. Those who had received an induction were asked to state their level of agreement with a series of statements about their induction and at least 80% agreed to some extent that their induction:

    o   gave them a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as a board member

    o   gave them a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the board and any committees

    o   gave them an understanding of the functions and structure of the organisation

    o   brought them up-to-date with current board activities and issues for the organisation

    o   provided them with information on how to conduct their business as a board member (e.g. code of conduct, expenses policy)

    o   provided them with opportunities to meet key people in the organisation other than board members (e.g. senior managers).

Training and development

36. Ninety-one per cent of all respondents said that they have opportunities to consider any training and development needs to support their role as a board member and 87 per cent said that they have opportunities to address any training and development needs to support their role as a board member.

37. Just over a quarter of chairs (27 per cent) had received specific training to support them in their role. This figure was highest for chairs of NDPBs and Scottish Water (35 per cent) and lowest for chairs of executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (13 per cent).

Skills and expertise on the board

38. While 93 per cent of all chairs reported that they had reviewed the overall mix of skills and expertise across their board in the last year, for executive agencies and non-ministerial departments this figure was 50 per cent.

39. Sixty-nine per cent of board members felt that their board has the right mix of skills and expertise it needs to carry out its roles and responsibilities. Of the 237 who said their board did not have the right mix, 54 per cent reported that their board is working towards filling any skill gaps through appointments or developing existing members. Eighty-six per cent of chairs said this was the case, as did 75 per cent of chief executives.

40. Twenty-two per cent of respondents said they were very confident that plans are in place for an orderly succession of members, so that the board retains its current skills and brings people on board with skills needed in the future. Thirty-three per cent of college members but only ten per cent of NHS body members were very confident of this.

41. Thirty-six per cent of all members were reasonably confident, 25 per cent have some confidence and 11 per cent are not at all confident of succession plans. Only one per cent of chairs, but 17 per cent of chief executives and executive members, were not at all confident.
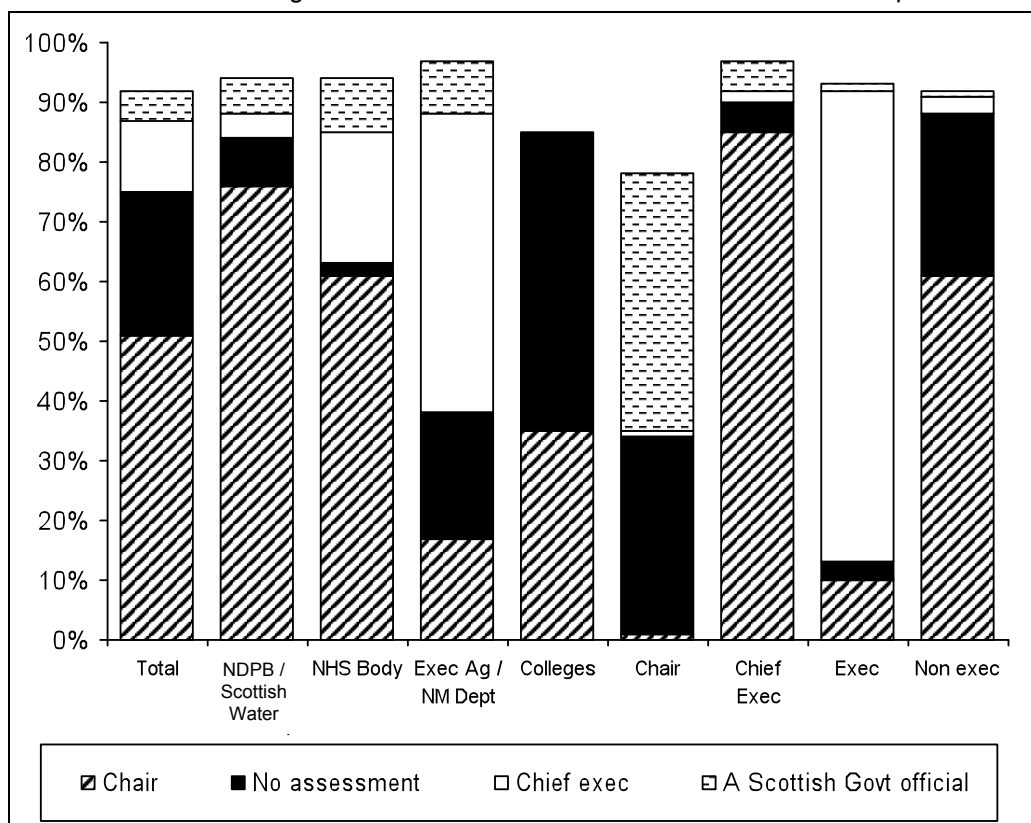
Assessment

42. The majority (51 per cent) of members said that the chair assesses their performance. In the case of executive agencies and non-ministerial departments 50 per cent said their assessment was carried out by the chief executive (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6

Assessment of role
Board members of colleges are least like to receive an assessment of their performance

Source: Audit Scotland

43. Respondents who said they had an assessment were asked whether they felt their most recent performance assessment:

- o identified their strengths and where they are performing well (73 per cent said yes, six per cent said no): 13 per cent of college members said no.

- o identified areas where they need training or development (47 per cent said yes, 30 per cent said no): 48 per cent of chairs said no.

- o resulted in a set of personal performance objectives (35 per cent said yes, 42 per cent said no): 87 per cent of chief executives and 83% of executive members said yes.

- o provided an opportunity to discuss any issues about relationships within the board (68 per cent said yes, 11 per cent said no).

- o provided an opportunity to ask any questions or discuss any issues about the board's operation (71 per cent said yes, seven per cent said no).

Board conduct and practice

Methods of operation

44. Board members in executive agencies and non-ministerial departments were less likely (60 per cent compared to 77 per cent overall) to say that their board has reviewed its methods of operation in the last year. Ninety-five per cent of chief executives said their board had reviewed its methods of operation in the last year.

Board meetings

45. Most members (88 per cent) felt their board held about the right number of meetings. Five per cent said there were too many meetings and this number was highest among executive members (18 per cent) and NHS body board members (13 per cent). Board members from NHS bodies were also more likely than others to say their board meetings were too long (30 per cent compared to 18 per cent overall).

46. In answer to the question on meetings that have restricted attendance or are closed to the public, 40 per cent of members felt this was always appropriate and 27 per cent that it was usually appropriate. Only one per cent said they were never appropriate.

How boards operate together

47. Members were presented with a series of statements about the way in which their board operates together and asked to state their level of agreement with each; the majority of responses were positive. Mean scores were calculated using the following scores:

    o   Agree strongly = 4

    o   Agree = 3

    o   Disagree = 2

    o   Disagree strongly = 1

48. Therefore, the higher the mean score, the stronger the level of agreement with the statement. There were some significant differences (at the 99 per cent confidence level) between mean scores across types of member and across types of board. These are noted below.

"The board is dealing with important issues" (overall mean score 3.6)

There were differences between answers from NHS body members (mean score 3.4) who were less likely to agree than NDPB and Scottish Water members and college members (both 3.6).

"We spend too much time discussing things that have nothing to do with the agenda" (1.6)

NHS body members were more likely to agree (1.8) with this statement than members of boards of both NDPBs and Scottish Water (1.5) and colleges (1.5).
Executive members (1.8) were more likely to agree than chairs (1.4) and non-executive members (1.6).

"We have many good discussions and debates on this board" (3.2)

Executive members were less likely to agree (2.9) then all other types of members: chairs (3.3), chief executives (3.4) and non-executive members (3.2).

"The board seems to have a hard time making decisions" (1.7)

NHS body members were more likely to agree (1.9) than college members (1.7).
Executive members were more likely to agree (1.9) than chief executives (1.5) and non-executive members (1.7).

"We tend to deal with a lot of issues that are outside our mandate" (1.6)

NHS body members were more likely to agree (1.8) than others: NDPBs and Scottish Water (1.5), executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (1.5) and colleges (1.5).
Executive members were more likely to agree (1.8) than chairs (1.4), chief executives (1.5) and non-executive members (1.6).
Chairs were less likely to agree (1.4) than non-executive members (1.6).

"The board takes collective responsibility for board decisions, even if some members do not agree with the decision" (3.4)

Members of NDPBs and Scottish Water were more likely to agree (3.4) than executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (3.2).

> *"This board makes an important contribution to the organisation"* (3.5)

Members of NHS bodies were less likely to agree (3.4) than members of NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.6) and colleges (3.6).
Members of executive agencies and non-ministerial departments were less likely to agree (3.3) than NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.6) and colleges (3.6).
Executive members (3.3) were less likely to agree than chairs (3.6) and non-executive members (3.5).

49. There were no significant differences noted in relation to the statements:

   o *"Our board meetings are always organised"* (overall mean score 3.6)

   o *"The board has a hard time focussing on issues"* (1.8)

Supporting the work of the board

50. Mean scores were also applied to answers to the question '*how effective do you think the board's committees/subcommittees are in supporting the work of the board?'* (4= highly effective to 1= not at all effective).

51. Eighty-four per cent saw the committee/subcommittee as effective or highly effective (overall mean score 3.3). There were differences, at the 99 per cent confidence level, in the mean scores for members of NHS bodies (3.2) who saw their board's committees as less effective than did members of NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.3) and colleges (3.4). There was also a difference between executive agencies and non-ministerial department members (3.2) who saw their committees as less effective than did college members (3.4).

52. Executive members felt their board's committees were less effective (mean score 3.0) than other member types: chairs (3.5), chief executives (3.4) and non-executive members (3.3).

Information provided

53. The majority of members answer 'all' or 'most' of the time to each of the statements about the information provided to them, i.e., information:

   o is provided at the right time (90 per cent)

   o has the right level of detail (88 per cent)

   o supports me to participate in board discussions (93 per cent)

   o supports me to participate in board decision-making (92 per cent)

   o supports me to monitor risks to the organisation (82 per cent)

   o supports me to monitor the organisation's performance (85 per cent)

   o supports me to hold senior management to account (77 per cent).

Relationships within boards

54. Mean scores were calculated for the series of statements about how members of boards relate to one another. Again, the higher the mean score, the stronger the level of agreement with the statement:

   o   Agree strongly = 4

   o   Agree = 3

   o   Disagree = 2

   o   Disagree strongly = 1

55. On the whole, responses to this series of statements were positive but, again, there were some significant differences (at the 99 per cent confidence level) in the mean scores across board types and board member types.

"The members of this board work well together" (3.3)
Members of NHS bodies were less likely to agree (3.2) than members of NDPBs and Scottish Water, executive agencies and non-ministerial departments and colleges (all 3.4). Executive board members were less likely to agree (3.1) than chairs (3.4) and non-executive members (3.4).

"Poor relationships between board members make it difficult for the board to do its work" (1.6)
Members of NHS bodies were more likely to agree (1.8) than members of executive NDPBs and Scottish Water (1.6), executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (1.4) and colleges (1.6). Executive board members were more likely to agree (1.8) than non-executive members (1.6).

"All of the members of this board participate in some way" (3.2)
Members of executive agencies and non-ministerial departments were more likely to agree (3.5) than members of NHS bodies (3.1) and colleges (3.2). Chairs were more likely to agree (3.4) than non-executive members (3.2).

"The chair encourages useful participation from members" (3.5)
Members of NHS bodies (3.3) were less likely to agree than members of executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (3.6) and colleges (3.5). Chairs were more likely to agree (3.6) than executive members (3.3).

"Some members tend to dominate board meetings" (2.3)
Members of NHS bodies (2.4) were more likely to agree than members of NDPBs and Scottish Water (2.2) and executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (2.1).

"Some members spend too much time representing the interests of specific regions or people groups" (1.9)
Members of NHS bodies (2.2) were more likely to agree than members of NDPBs and Scottish Water (1.9), executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (1.6) and colleges (1.8). Chairs were less likely to agree (1.7) than executive board members (2.2) or non-executive members (1.9). Non-executive members were less likely to agree (1.9) than executive board members (2.2).

> *"The board makes good use of the skills and knowledge of its members"* (3.2)
>
> Members of NHS bodies were less likely to agree (3.1) than members of NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.3) and colleges (3.3).
> Executive board members were less likely to agree (3.1) than chairs (3.4).

> *"The chair and the chief executive understand and respect each others roles"* (3.5)*
> Members of NHS bodies were less likely to agree (3.3) than members of NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.5) and colleges (3.5).
> Executive board members were less likely to agree (3.3) than chairs (3.7) and chief executives (3.6).
> Non-executive board members were less likely to agree (3.4) than chairs (3.7).

*Members holding both roles were instructed to skip this question.

> *"There is a balance of power between the chair and the chief executive"* (3.2)*
>
> Members of NHS bodies were less likely to agree (3.1) than members of NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.3).
> Executive board members were less likely to agree (3.1) than chairs (3.5) and chief executives (3.4).
> Non-executive board members were less likely to agree (3.2) than chairs (3.5).

*Members holding both roles were instructed to skip this question.

> *"There is a balance of power between non-executive members and executive members"* (3.0)*
> Members of NDPBs and Scottish Water were more likely to agree (3.2) than members of NHS bodies (2.9) and executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (2.9).

*Members of boards without both executive and non-executive members were instructed to skip this question.

56. There were no significant differences noted in relation to the statement:

   o *"The chair leads this board effectively"* (overall mean score 3.4)

The relationship between boards and their stakeholders

57. Relationships between boards and stakeholders were all viewed fairly positively. Mean scores were applied (from very poor = 1 to very good = 5) and significance testing showed differences (at the 99 per cent confidence level) in respondents' views of some relationships.

> *"Perceived relationship between board and Scottish Ministers"* (3.8)
>
> NDPB and Scottish Water members (4.0) had a more positive view of this relationship than college members (3.8).
> Chief executives (4.1) had a more positive view of this relationship than executive members (3.7).

> *"Perceived relationship between board and Scottish Government officials"* (3.8)
>
> This relationship was viewed more positively by chief executives (4.2) than non-executive members (3.8)

"Perceived relationship between board and local government" (3.6)
This relationship was viewed more positively by colleges (3.8) compared to the other board types: NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.4), NHS bodies (3.5) and executive agencies and non-ministerial department (3.5). Chairs (3.8) and chief executives (3.9) had a more positive view than executive members (3.4).

"Perceived relationship between board and employees of the organisation" (3.9)
NHS body members (3.7) viewed this relationship less positively than NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.9) and colleges (3.9). Executive members had a less positive view of this relationship than non-executive members (3.9), chairs (4.0) and chief executives (4.1).

"Perceived relationship between board and members of the public" (3.5)
Colleges (3.7) had a more positive view of the relationship with members of the public than executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (3.2), NDPBs and Scottish Water (3.4) and NHS bodies (3.4). Executive members (3.2) had a less positive view than non-executive members (3.5), chairs (3.6) and chief executives (3.7).

58. There were no significant differences noted in relation to:

   o *"Perceived relationship between board and members of the Scottish Parliament"* (overall mean score 3.6)

   o *"Perceived relationship between board and Parliamentary committees"* (3.3)

The role of the board

59. Members were given a list of roles which their board could play and asked to say for each whether they believe their board should play this role and whether it actually does play this role. For all of the statements, a higher proportion of all board members felt that their board should play a lead role than believed their board actually plays a lead role (Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 7

Role of the board

Three-quarters of board members believe the board has a lead role in leading and directing their organisation.

Role	Should play a lead role (%)	Actually plays a lead role (%)
Leading and directing the organisation	67	50
Challenging and scrutinising the organisation's senior managers	80	55
Advising and supporting the organisation's senior managers	56	39
Ensuring that the organisation meets its objectives effectively	80	58
Providing a focus for accountability to the organisation's stakeholders, including the Scottish Government	82	66

Source: Audit Scotland

60. The majority of members felt that their boards were performing very or quite well in each of these roles. Members gave three main examples of other important roles played by their board:

   o   Collaboration with / engagement with stakeholders (17 per cent)

   o   To be representative of/promote the organisation (17 per cent)

   o   Ensure good governance / probity / public accountability (17 per cent)

61. The majority (90 per cent) of members felt that their board has a shared view of its roles and responsibilities all or most of the time. Twenty one percent of all members felt their board had a shared view of its roles and responsibilities 'all of the time' but this figure fell to nine per cent amongst executive members and to ten per cent amongst members of NHS boards.

Views on the appointment/reappointment process

Appointments

62. Sixty-seven per cent of executive members or chairs were appointed within the last 3 years and these members were asked for their comments on the appointment or reappointment process. Almost a quarter of these respondents (23 per cent) described the process as thorough, rigorous, professional,

formal, well thought out, clear, structured and/or focussed. This figure was highest amongst members of executive agencies and non-ministerial departments (32 per cent).

63. Twenty-three per cent of members of NDPBs and Scottish Water boards commented that the length of time between interview and approval was too long (compared to nine per cent of the total). Very few respondents (three per cent) felt the appointments process, in terms of appointing members with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed on their board, was not at all effective.

64. The main additional comments provided on the effectiveness of the appointment process were that the process was good or effective (15 per cent) or that the process identifies people who have the required skills, knowledge and/or experience (11 per cent).

Barriers to membership

65. The main barrier to membership identified across board and board member types was the time commitment needed (37 per cent identified this as a barrier); 50 per cent of chairs and 49 per cent of chief executives identified time commitment as a barrier. Amongst board types, college members were more likely to identify time as a barrier (48 per cent) and NDPBs and Scottish Water less likely (25 per cent).

Appointment of non-executive members

66. While just over a quarter of all board members (27 per cent) had been involved in appointing non-executive board members in the last two years, there were some variations across board member and board types:

   o 89 per cent of chairs but 13 per cent of executive board members had been involved

   o 42 per cent of college but 12 per cent of NHS board members had been involved.

Other comments

67. Respondents were invited to make any other comments they felt relevant. Five percent of members commented on poor relationships or roles not working well within their own boards while three per cent mentioned poor communications. Three percent said that their board is effective or well run. There were a wide range of other comments from two per cent of respondents or fewer.

Appendix 1: Public bodies included in this study

Colleges (39)	NDPBs (29)	NHS bodies (23)	Executive agencies (11)
1. Aberdeen College 2. **Adam Smith College** 3. Angus College 4. Anniesland College 5. Ayr College 6. Banff and Buchan College of Further Education 7. Barony College 8. Borders College 9. Cardonald College 10. Carnegie College 11. Central College of Commerce 12. Clydebank College 13. Coatbridge College 14. Cumbernauld College 15. Dumfries and Galloway College 16. Dundee College 17. Edinburgh's Telford College 18. Elmwood College 19. Forth Valley College 20. Glasgow College of Nautical Studies 21. Glasgow Metropolitan 22. **Inverness College** 23. James Watt College of Further and Higher Education 24. Jewel and Esk Valley College 25. **John Wheatley College** 26. Kilmarnock College 27. Langside College 28. Lews Castle College 29. Moray College 30. Motherwell College 31. North Glasgow College 32. North Highland College 33. Oatridge Agricultural College 34. Perth College 35. Reid Kerr College 36. South Lanarkshire College 37. Stevenson College 38. Stow College 39. West Lothian College	1. Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2. **Cairngorms National Park Authority** 3. Highlands and Islands Enterprise 4. Learning and Teaching Scotland 5. Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority 6. National Galleries of Scotland 7. **National Library of Scotland** 8. National Museums of Scotland 9. Quality Meat Scotland 10. Risk Management Authority 11. Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh 12. Scottish Arts Council* 13. Scottish Children's Reporter Administration 14. Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care** 15. Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission 16. **Scottish Enterprise** 17. Scottish Environment Protection Agency 18. **Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council** 19. Scottish Legal Aid Board 20. Scottish Legal Complaints Commission 21. **Scottish Natural Heritage** 22. Scottish Police Services Authority 23. **Scottish Qualifications Authority** 24. Scottish Screen* 25. Scottish Social Services Council 26. Skills Development Scotland 27. Sportscotland 28. VisitScotland 29. Water Industry Commission for Scotland	1. **NHS Ayrshire and Arran** 2. NHS Borders 3. NHS Dumfries and Galloway 4. NHS Fife 5. NHS Forth Valley 6. NHS Grampian 7. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde 8. NHS Highland 9. NHS Lanarkshire 10. NHS Lothian 11. Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland 12. National Waiting Times Centre Board 13. NHS 24 14. NHS Education for Scotland 15. NHS Health Scotland 16. **NHS National Services Scotland** 17. NHS Quality Improvement Scotland 18. NHS Orkney 19. Scottish Ambulance Service 20. **NHS Shetland** 21. State Hospitals Board for Scotland 22. **NHS Tayside** 23. NHS Western Isles	1. Accountant in Bankruptcy 2. **Historic Scotland** 3. HM Inspectorate of Education 4. National Archives of Scotland 5. Scottish Court Service*** 6. Scottish Housing Regulator**** 7. **Scottish Prison Service** 8. Scottish Public Pensions Agency 9. Social Work Inspection Agency** 10. Student Awards Agency for Scotland 11. Transport Scotland

Non-ministerial departments (3)	Public corporation (1)
1. General Register Office for Scotland 2. **Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator** 3. Registers of Scotland	1. **Scottish Water**

Notes
We conducted fieldwork in the 17 organisations in bold.

* The Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen had a joint board in readiness for their merger into Creative Scotland which took place on 1 July 2010.
** These organisations will become part of the new Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland,
*** The Scottish Courts Service became a non-ministerial department on 1 April 2010.
**** It is proposed that the Scottish Housing Regulator will become a non-ministerial department under the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

Appendix 2: Methodology

In mid August, 2009, a formal warm-up letter from Audit Scotland was sent to the chairs (cc'd to PAs/Clerks where we had this information) of the 29 NDPBs, 23 NHS bodies, 11 executive agencies, 3 non-ministerial departments, Scottish Water and 39 colleges; 106 bodies in total. This letter introduced the survey and requested assistance in the distribution of the survey to individual board members.

All boards expressed willingness to participate and 1527 questionnaires were sent for distribution to board members of 105 boards (two NDPBs, the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, share a joint board). The survey was also available to complete via George Street Research's secure online survey site.

Just over half (777) returned a completed questionnaire; 58 (seven per cent of those completing a questionnaire) completed the questionnaire online. Audit Scotland had set a target of 35 per cent completion for each board type and 50 per cent completion overall; as shown in the table below these targets were all achieved.

Board Type	Number dispatched	Number returned	% return
NDPBs	341	184	54
NHS bodies	428	212	50
Executive agencies	107	56	52
Colleges	615	298	48
Non-ministerial departments	23	14	61
Scottish Water	13	13	100
TOTALS	**1527**	**777**	**51**

One point to note is that in this, as in any self completion survey, respondents were free to choose which questions to address. Therefore base sizes at each question differ depending on whether or not all respondents provided an answer.

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