

News release

For immediate release

Progress at NHS Tayside but risks remain

NHS Tayside has improved its financial management and service performance, but risks related to its high running costs remain.

The health board has improved waiting times for some services and made recurring savings of more than £14 million in 2019/20. The Auditor General says NHS Tayside has also made positive moves to improve mental health services after a highly critical independent report, and needs to continue to show progress.

However, the board needed £7 million from the Scottish Government in 2019/20 to break even, the eighth year in a row it has required financial assistance. NHS Tayside continues to have an expensive operating model, spending more on staffing, in-patient costs and prescriptions than the Scottish average. And it still has a number of senior leadership posts it needs to fill on a permanent basis.

In common with all health boards, Covid-19 has had an impact on NHS Tayside's focus and priorities, and it has yet to reflect this in its financial planning. In February 2021 the Auditor General will publish his annual NHS in Scotland report. It will comment more widely on how prepared the NHS in Scotland was for a pandemic, how it responded and the challenges that lie ahead.

Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland said:

"NHS Tayside has made some clear progress under its new leadership team after a number of very challenging years, but it still faces a number of risks.

"The board knows that achieving financial stability lies in changing the way its services are designed and delivered. We've already seen how Covid-19 has accelerated innovation in some areas. It's now essential that NHS Tayside builds on that good work and increases the pace of change in priority services."

For further information contact Patrick McFall Tel: 0131 625 1663 pmcfall@audit-scotland.gov.uk or media@audit-scotland.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

1. NHS Tayside met six out of nine waiting times standards in 2019/20, compared to one in 2018/19.
2. Recurring savings of £14.3 million were achieved by the board in 2019/20. That represents 40 per cent of its £37.5 million funding gap.
3. NHS Tayside's current three-year financial plan forecast includes projected savings of £85.2 million over a three-year period from 2020/21.
4. The Auditor General has prepared the report on NHS Tayside's audited accounts for 2019/20 under Section 22 of the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. This allows the Auditor General to bring to the Parliament and the public's attention matters of public interest related to the financial statements of public bodies.

5. Section 22 reports are submitted to Scottish Ministers for laying in the Parliament along with the accounts of the relevant body. While there are statutory deadlines for these reports, the actual timing of publication is determined by when the report is laid in the Scottish Parliament by Scottish Ministers.

6. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk

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