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6 February 2024

Dear Russell and Mark,

I wrote to you last November and agreed to provide an update on the oversight and escalation framework. As you are aware I reissued the framework on the 22 January 2024 and this can be found at: [Oversight and Escalation Framework](#).

The previous escalation and intervention framework was introduced in 2014 following previous PAC recommendations. Since its introduction the tripartite partners - Welsh Government, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and Audit Wales, together with health organisations, have learnt lessons through the delivery and operationalisation of the arrangements. Many things have changed because of this learning. There is some evidence that the current arrangements show some evidence of improvement amongst those health boards that have been escalated.

Considerable work has been undertaken on this Framework and the refreshed version builds upon the engagement and feedback that has been received over the last few years through workshops, questionnaires and discussions with NHS organisations. The review process included an assessment of the processes in operation in England and Scotland and has identified a number of areas that needed to be addressed including:

- The current escalation and intervention framework is in need of a refresh.
- The criteria for de-escalation is not always clearly defined. There needs to be a clear framework and financial indicators that determine where in the framework each organisation should be and what triggers de-escalation.
- Clearer levels of support and action need to be set for each level of the framework.
- The current system is too focused on acute health services – not ‘whole system’.
- Insufficient focus on diagnosing ‘root cause’ of difficulties (to ensure most appropriate/effective response is adopted).
- Can be interpreted as punitive rather than supportive (‘done to’ Boards rather than working with them).
- No option for Boards to proactively seek support.
- Quality of/availability of appropriate support packages (resourcing of relevant skills).

NHS organisations and tripartite participants have had opportunity to comment on draft versions of the revised framework and where appropriate their comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the final document.

The refreshed version builds heavily upon the learning and experiences of the health boards that have been in special measures. The oversight and escalation framework sets out the statutory environment within which the framework operates including the links to the planning and performance frameworks. It sets out the process through which the Welsh Government gains assurance on NHS bodies and how the escalation and de-escalation process works. The framework sets out the domains (based upon the quality standards) against which each organisation is assessed and challenged. The framework also includes a new escalation level – “level 2”. This is intended to allow Welsh Government and the NHS Executive to work with the health board in a proactive manner to prevent formal escalation.

I hope that this update is helpful and please let me know if you require any further information or briefing on these matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. E. Morgan'.

Eluned Morgan AS/MS

Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services