

Sir Harry Burns
Chair
Review: Targets & Indicators for Health & Social Care
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Dear Sir Harry

As you know, the RCN has been working hard for some months now, in partnership across sectors and professions, to prompt a debate on measuring success and to re-set our current approach to health and wellbeing targets. We are pleased that this Government review has been established, with you as Chair, to recommend options for change. I look forward to contributing to the work.

Meantime, you have asked for a short submission from the RCN on the principles for the review. You will be aware that the RCN, in partnership with the Health and Social Care Academy and the Alliance, recently wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, following a consultation event we had hosted to discuss this very issue. In that joint letter we set out the following principles for the review, which I hope is helpful to you:

- If the review is to contribute to the public sector transformational change agenda, we urge that it does not simply jump to amending existing targets or creating new ones. We are keen to see the review focus its first stage work on defining what success should look like across our health and care services and setting out the principles for how we want to set, measure and report on that success. Knowing what matters most to people is a crucial first step to set direction.
- In keeping with other Scottish Government policy, we would wish to see the review shape its work through a human rights based approach, which focuses on the right to attain the highest standard of health and rights to full participation and inclusion in society.
- Language is clearly an issue in helping us move to a shared understanding of what success is and how we measure it. We ask that the review clearly sets out how it intends to use terms like “outcomes”, “targets”, “indicators” and “measures”.
- We urge that nothing is “off the table” for the review, as this risks skewing the debate and limiting the ability of the review group members to be aspirational and genuinely innovative in finding new solutions across the whole system. A single, streamlined approach across all health and care provision will be key to success, particularly in the light of integration.
- Collaborative ownership and delivery of future success will be crucial to embedding radically new ways of working and changing service culture. We ask that the review, in its own work, models a commitment to co-producing a

new way forward with genuine engagement of the public and of staff from across all sectors.

- Cross party support will be required to ensure political backing for a change in approach and confidence in the future accountability of publicly funded organisations. We ask that the government review works to actively engage with partners across the political spectrum and build consensus.
- We do not underestimate the scale of task the review group will need to undertake to effect genuine change. To complete its work effectively it will need the time and resource to shape and communicate transformation across sectors based on a new model of success.

Furthermore, I also attach the Executive Summary of our recent publication “Measuring Success: Principles for a new approach to improving health and wellbeing in Scotland” which gives further detail on the RCN’s position. The full document is available here: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/policy-briefings/sco-pol-measuring-success-report>

I look forward to the first meeting on the 7 November.

All good wishes



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PRINCIPLES FOR MEASURING SUCCESS IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING

There is no perfect way to measure the success of services in improving health and wellbeing. On that basis this paper puts forward a set of principles, which the RCN has developed through engagement with partners across Scotland, to shape the detail of a future approach. Taken as a whole, the RCN believes these principles will help Scotland build the new system to measure success in health and wellbeing that it so urgently needs.

FOCUS ON A SINGLE SET OF OUTCOMES TO SET PRIORITIES

Scotland should develop a new national outcomes framework, with the full participation of the public and health and care staff across the public, private, independent and third sectors.

The framework should provide a single, shared focus for setting priorities for policy, investment and activity across all agencies. It should simplify, not add to or confuse, the current picture.

Change should be developed, planned and implemented in a phased and responsible manner.

ENSURE CLEAR, PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Once the national outcomes framework is set, the Scottish Government should develop with all stakeholders, including the public, a small set of new national indicators for health and wellbeing.

These indicators should provide a temperature-check on how health and wellbeing services across Scotland are working to deliver what matters to people.

The indicators should be open to regular review.

LISTEN TO AND EMPOWER INDIVIDUALS

The new approach should empower individuals by listening to them and supporting them to achieve their personal outcomes.

There should be shared decision making and a human rights-based approach embedded across the entire system.

IMPROVE OUTCOMES THROUGH COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Scotland has a strong foundation in clinical collaboration. Work to improve outcomes, test innovation and ensure the quality of care should build on this by devolving power to networks of expert and experienced people to create and implement robust, evidence-informed measures of success.

New collaborative networks should include expertise from across all sectors and from people who have, or have had, particular conditions. They should have access to resources to implement changes that will improve outcomes. And specialty networks should find ways to work together to ensure people with multiple health conditions can still enjoy a joined-up, effective service.

ACCEPT LOCAL VARIATIONS WITHIN THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Scottish Parliament should reach a cross-party consensus on the scope of national, local and individual control on setting priorities for success.

Where the setting of measures is devolved to local partners they have a responsibility to state how their decisions fit with the national outcomes.

BE CLEAR WHAT ANY MEASURE IS INTENDED TO DO

The purpose of any new measure should be transparent to ensure that it is developed, implemented and reported on appropriately.

All measures should be developed with an exit strategy so that when they are no longer needed they can be retired.

Proxy measures should only be used where all other options to measure an improvement issue directly have been explored by partners and reasonably rejected. They should be reported within the context of the wider issue they are intended to help to improve.

Regular reviews should assess whether the unintended consequences of implementing a proxy measure have come to outweigh the benefits, and a new approach is required.

TOLERANCES SHOULD BE BUILT INTO THE SYSTEM

The new approach should build in agreed tolerances to all quantifiable measures.

Performance management within tolerance levels will allow for the best use of resources, particularly at times of unexpected pressure, and a more sophisticated investigation of performance to support genuine improvement.

REBALANCE POWER TO CHANGE THE CULTURE OF SERVICES

The Scottish Government, working with all stakeholders including parties represented in the Scottish Parliament, professionals, providers and the public, should outline clearly the culture of services that Scotland wants to develop. The performance management of services, whether local or national, should live up to those aspirations.

Decision makers at every level should enable and champion a cultural transformation through proactive support for continuous improvement, rather than blame.

All sectors and professions will need to commit to sharing control and resources to best meet the needs of people using services.

The bodies responsible for setting priorities for services locally and nationally will need to collaborate to ensure consistency of purpose and avoid competing priorities which may harm patient outcomes and waste resources.

INVEST IN DATA TO SUPPORT THE NEW APPROACH TO SUCCESS

The Scottish Government, with cross-party support from the Scottish Parliament, should create a data investment plan to accompany the transition to a new approach to measuring success. Scotland's analytical and improvement experts need to be supported to help drive transformational change.

Any new policy priority or strategy set by the Scottish Government must include a statement on its impact on existing measurements and the investment required to develop any new measures to assess success.