Dear Mr Henry

AUDITOR GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND REPORT – OVERVIEW OF THE NHS IN SCOTLAND’S PERFORMANCE 2008/09

Thank you for your letter of 29 June regarding the Auditor General for Scotland Report - Overview of the NHS in Scotland’s Performance 2008/09. The Committee asked how many unfilled posts there are in each NHS Board and what total cash amount these vacancies would equate to for each board. It also requested a copy of the revised guidance on our consultation processes.

Unfilled Posts
NHSScotland Boards have fully delegated authority over employment issues, including how they manage unfilled posts. In their work to restructure and redesign services to ensure high quality patient care, Boards are actively managing their workforce to minimise vacancies. However, where vacancies do occur, some of these may be filled either through redeployments or by advertising the posts, while some others may be left unfilled.

The Information Services Division (ISD) which is part of NHS National Services Scotland, collects vacancy information for three types of staff - Consultants, Nurses and Midwives and Allied Health Professions and are included in the links below:

- consultants  http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/5899.html
- nurses & midwives  http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/5352.html#vacancies
- AHPs  http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/5332.html

The latest figures are based on information from the Scottish Workforce Information Standard System (SWISS), which show unfilled posts that boards are actively trying to fill as at 30 September 2009. The cost of filling these vacancies is influenced by factors including the salary position of the successful candidate and therefore attempting to calculate the overall cost carries significant risk of error. We do not hold vacancy information for other types of staff.

Consultation Process
‘Informing, Engaging and Consulting People in Developing Health and Community Care Services’  (http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/mels/CEL2010_04.pdf) was issued in February 2010 to assist NHS Boards with their engagement with patients, the public, and stakeholders on the delivery of local healthcare services. The guidance is available on the Scottish Health Council’s website (http://www.scottishhealthcouncil.org/shc/publications/Guidance) which promotes Patient Focus and Public Involvement in the NHS in Scotland.

Efficiency & Productivity Programme
In addition to the information requested in your letter, it was agreed that I would provide you with a copy of the Efficiency & Productivity Programme progress report:


The Committee were keen to establish how good practice is shared across the NHS by the Health Directorates Improvement Support Team (IST). IST is responsible for supporting NHS
Boards to deliver HEAT targets through national improvement programmes such as the Efficiency & Productivity Programme, No Delays -18 weeks Programme, the Mental Health Collaborative and the Long Term Conditions Collaborative. These programmes are a proven way of accelerating the uptake of good practice and combine training in continuous improvement techniques with exposure to best practice. Additionally the team’s work is supported by publications and by the IST website where over 200 case studies of improvement are available.

IST is also supporting NHS Boards to improve efficiency & productivity by developing NHS Benchmarking through initiatives including the National Scorecard and Better Quality Better Value Indicators – linked to its programmes of improvement which apply LEAN redesign techniques. Details can be found at:

http://www.improvingnhsscotland.scot.nhs.uk/Pages/Home.aspx

IST also provides more tailored support to NHS Boards in areas where faster progress is required or where Boards signal extra support is needed to deliver a challenging target. IST works to spread good practice in these cases through multi-disciplinary support teams such as the Cancer Performance Support Team.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

KEVIN WOODS
Dear Dr Woods,

AUDITOR GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND REPORT – OVERVIEW OF THE NHS IN SCOTLAND’S PERFORMANCE 2008/09

Thank you for giving oral evidence to the Public Audit Committee on 23 June 2010. The Official Report of that Committee meeting is available on the Committee’s webpage and I attach the relevant link below:

The Scottish Parliament - Public Audit Committee Official Report

At that meeting, Cathie Craigie MSP sought information on unfilled posts within the NHS (column 1813). I would therefore be grateful if you could provide the Committee with further information on how many unfilled posts there are in each NHS Board and what total cash amount these vacancies would equate to for each board.

At column 1803 of the Official report you referred to a revised approach to the management of change with a publication earlier this year of revised guidance on the consultation process. I would be most grateful if you could provide copies of that guidance (either in paper copy or alternatively provide a web link if the guidance is available online).

I would be grateful for your response to the above questions by Friday 30 July. Please do let me know if this time frame presents you with any difficulties.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the Clerk, Jane Williams on 0131 348 5236 or by email at pa.committee@scottish.parliament.uk.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Henry MSP
Convener
Public Audit Committee