

Board Meeting in Public

Tuesday, 24 March 2026

Title of Paper	Board Effectiveness Review Action Plan	Agenda No.	4.1.1
Nature of Paper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Official <input type="checkbox"/> Official Sensitive		
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Lead Executive	Helen Gillan, Director of Quality and Governance		
Non-Executive Director Sponsor	Peter Wyman, Chair		
Presenter(s) at Meeting	Silena Dominy, Company Secretary		
Presented for	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approval <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assurance <input type="checkbox"/> Update		
Is there a plan to communicate this to the organisation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yet to be determined Published within Public Board pack on website		
Executive Summary			
<p>The annual Board Effectiveness Review was completed during December with the final report published at the Board meeting on 3 February 2026. The review concluded that the Board generally operates well and improvements over the last year have been acknowledged particularly in relation to risk management. Some areas have been identified to be improving, with opportunity to advance this further, such as the Board's approach to continuous improvement, strategic focus and stakeholder engagement.</p> <p>Opportunities for improvement in relation to long-term strategic planning, board culture and clarity in relation to succession planning were raised along with an opportunity to improve the standard and size of Board papers.</p> <p>This report sets out proposed actions to improve the effectiveness of the Board further and reports on progress against the 2024/25 actions agreed.</p>			
Previously Considered by			
N/A			
Recommendation			
The Board is asked to approve the proposed action plan and give its support to achievement of the actions.			
Risk(s) identified (Link to Board Assurance Framework Risks)			
P-11 Corporate Governance			
Strategic Objective(s) this paper relates to:			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with partners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invest in people and culture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Drive innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Modernise our operations <input type="checkbox"/> Grow and diversify our donor base			
Appendices:			

Board Effectiveness Review 2025/26 Action Plan

Background

During December 2025, the Company Secretary undertook an internal Board effectiveness review in the form of a questionnaire-based survey of the views of Board members.

A report on the NHSBT Board’s effectiveness was formally presented to the Board at its meeting on 3 February 2025.

Main 2026 Findings

The review concluded that the Board generally operates well and that improvements over the last year have been achieved particularly in relation to risk management. It found that improvements were also made related to:

- Drive for continuous improvement,
- Maintaining strategic focus, and
- Stakeholder engagement.

The Board collectively felt that continuing to advance these areas would be beneficial.

The review highlighted opportunities for improvement in relation to:

- Long-term strategic planning,
- Board culture,
- Succession planning and diversity, and
- Standard and size of Board papers.

Action Plan

The Board have considered the findings of the internally facilitated Board effectiveness review and the following actions are proposed:

Finding	Action
<p>Drive for Continuous Improvement</p> <p>While this was seen as an improving area it was suggested that further scrutiny and accountability of projects would be a benefit to ensure so far as possible delivery on time.</p> <p>It was also suggested that benefit could be gained from learning from other organisations and from public inquiries, as well as from lessons learnt.</p>	<p>Ongoing Action: From April 2026, executive members of the Board will undertake fortnightly reviews of strategic projects and transformational programmes with deep-dive reports where these are not performing to plan. Moving forward there will be greater focus on transformation delivery and capability. Where required, challenges will be escalated to Board meetings to allow further scrutiny and accountability for ‘back to green’ plans. The Board will continue to receive biannual reports on portfolio performance and the Board’s Audit, Risk and Governance Committee will receive status reports quarterly.</p> <p>Responsibility: Chief Executive and all Executive Directors.</p> <p>Ongoing Action: Seek opportunities to learn from other organisations and inquiries, and through reviewing lessons learnt.</p> <p>Responsibility: All Board Members</p>

Finding	Action
<p>Maintaining Strategic Focus and Long-term Strategic Planning</p> <p>Improvements in ensuring that Board time is predominately spent on strategic matters had been acknowledged and there was support for this continuing to be the case.</p> <p>The review identified support for ensuring that NHSBT's strategy secures its long-term future and is aligned with the Department of Health and Social Care's strategic aims and external drivers for strategic change. In view of the Government's 10 Year Plan for the NHS and the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive Officer it was considered that there was an opportunity to refresh NHSBT's strategy, particularly with a view to ensuring a sustainable funding model. Clear delivery plans are required.</p>	<p>Ongoing Action: Continue to focus the majority of agenda time and seminar sessions on strategic matters. Responsibility: Chair / Chief Executive Officer / Company Secretary</p> <p>Action: The Chief Executive Officer is considering executive portfolios to build greater strategic coherence at Board level, and enhance transformation capability. Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer. Timeframe: March 2027</p> <p>Action: Strategic seminar sessions were held on 3 February 2026 with follow up sessions on 23 March 2026. These sessions will set the context for a refresh of NHSBT's Strategy that will also align with external drivers for change and DHSC's strategic aims. Responsibility: Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer led, with input from all Board members Timeframe: March 2027</p> <p>Action: Continued development of five-year financial plan to ensure a sustainable funding model. Responsibility: Chief Financial Officer led Timeframe: Board reviews in July and December 2026.</p>
<p>Board Culture</p> <p>An improved view was noted on the Board working well as a team however there is opportunity for the non-executive Board members and Executive Directors to develop their relationships and understand their respective roles and how they best work together as one unitary board.</p> <p>Both roles include challenging and debating proposals and holding performance to account. Whilst for Executive Directors this also occurs in ET meetings it is important for their views to be brought to Board meetings so that all voices are heard and actively listened to in the unitary board environment.</p>	<p>Ongoing Action: All Board members to share relevant and constructive views openly within Board meetings to ensure a robust debate of proposals. Responsibility: All Board members</p> <p>Action: The Board is going through a period of change with a new Chief Executive and recruitment to both non-executive and executive posts. Once recruitment is complete consideration will be given to the value of a Board development session. In the meantime, Board meetings and events associated with them can be used to informally develop relationships further. Responsibility: Chair / Chief Executive Officer Timeframe: Once required roles are filled.</p>

Finding	Action
<p>Clarity regarding the purpose of Non-Executive Director meetings would be beneficial.</p>	<p>Ongoing Action: The Chair provided clarity on the purpose of meetings of non-executive directors at the Board meeting on 3 February 2026. The Chief Executive is invited to attend such meetings. The Chair and Chief Executive are considering the optimum balance of meetings. Responsibility: Chair and Chief Executive</p>
<p>Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>Opportunities to strengthen visible leadership within NHSBT for the whole Board could be beneficial.</p> <p>Engagement with hospitals, trusts and other partners is largely executive led, and benefit may be gained from opportunities for the whole Board to engage with such stakeholders.</p>	<p>Ongoing Action: Continue to identify opportunities for Board members (executive and non-executive) to engage with NHSBT colleagues, such as Together Awards, conferences and town hall events. Directors should make every effort to visit the NHSBT centres they are aligned with. Responsibility: Chief People Officer/Assistant Director Corporate Communications led but all Board members may identify opportunities.</p> <p>Ongoing Action: Utilise Board dinners and visits to allow Board members (executive and non-executive) to engage with partners from hospitals, trusts, etc. Responsibility: Chair / Chief Executive Officer.</p>
<p>Successions Planning and Diversity</p> <p>There is a lack of awareness of succession planning arrangements for the Board as a whole. Greater clarity on the process for non-executive and executive Board members would be beneficial.</p> <p>It was felt that the diversity of the Board could be improved to ensure views are representative of our staff, patients and donors, and that diversity of thought exists.</p>	<p>Action: People Committee to report back to Board on the work they are reviewing related to succession planning and provide, together with the Chair, information on DHSC's role and activities related to Board succession planning. Responsibility: Chair / Chief People Officer / People Committee Chair / Company Secretary Timeframe: December 2026</p> <p>Ongoing Action: When executive and/or non-executive appointments become available, achieving greater diversity will be at the forefront of minds throughout recruitment. Responsibility: Chair / Chief Executive</p>
<p>Standard and Size of Board Papers</p> <p>Whilst there are good examples of Board papers, and guidance exists as to the appropriate approach to take this is not always followed. Improvements could be made to ensure consistency of approach, reduce pack size, whilst providing more clarity on key strategic focus.</p>	<p>Action: Review and re-communicate guidance on paper quality and size to ensure that papers are succinct, focus on key strategic matters, and provide clarity on the paper's purpose, required decisions, follow up actions and the cadence of follow up reporting. Optimum maximum size for papers and presentations to be determined. Responsibility: Chief of Staff led, however all executive directors to ensure that papers follow the new guidance. Timeframe: May 2026</p>

It is recommended that progress against these actions be reviewed via the 2026/27 Board effectiveness review.

2025 Response to BDO externally facilitated Board Effectiveness Review

In May 2025 the Board considered their response to the findings of BDO's 2024/25 evaluation of the Board's effectiveness. An update on the areas identified can be seen below.

Strategy and Ambition

BDO encouraged the Board to give greater strategic thought to questions of societal need and how NHSBT could fund work to seek to address these, where within the scope of NHSBT to do so.

Whilst the current strategy is rooted in the realism of our funding envelope and aligned to operational realities, the Board are now considering strategic areas for income generation, potential strategies that could attract funding and opportunities to improve efficiency. A strategy session was held on 21 July 2025. A further set of strategic seminar sessions were held on 3 February 2026 with follow up sessions on 23 March 2026. A number of avenues are being considered.

Progress has been made however the 2025/26 effectiveness review found that there was support for continued focus in this area.

Succession Planning and Development

BDO acknowledged good progress in defining and assessing technical skills desirable for the Board and encouraged focus on developing more general skills and competencies.

The Board Skills and Capability Framework now includes additional general skills, attributes and qualities required of a Board member (strategic thinking and decision making, constructive challenge, financial and numeracy skills). It also includes the NHS Leadership Competency Domains. The 2025 review included self-assessment against these general skills. A non-executive director session relating to constructive challenge was held in January 2025 which was considered beneficial.

Progress has been made, although the 2025/26 effectiveness review indicated that it would be helpful for all Board members to understand the action being taken to plan succession of the Board.

Size of the Board

BDO noted that the size of the Board is larger than is typically recommended by good practice and suggested consideration of this or enhancement of teamwork.

The complexity and statutory requirements for certain executive posts, together with the requirement for a greater number of non-executives leads to the current size of the Board. Opportunities for a slight reduction over time are being considered and this has been the case when incumbents have left the Board.

The 2025/26 effectiveness review has found that board culture could be improved and opportunities to improve teamwork across executive and non-executive members would be beneficial. This will therefore receive continued focus.

Public vs Private Meetings

In 2024/25, BDO found that the approach to public meetings was suitable but suggested that consideration be given to how attendance and viewership could be encouraged.

There is ongoing commitment that all items should be included in the public board session unless confidential or publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest. This principle is being regularly applied. Appropriate transparency to Board meetings is being provided and separate methods to engage stakeholders are in place.