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NHS Board Chief Executives
CC: NHS Board Chairs

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Dear Colleague

Volunteering - Clear Pathway Evaluation Report

I am writing to bring to your attention the [report evaluating the effectiveness of the Clear Pathway strategic guidance](#) on volunteering for NHS Boards published in August on Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS) website. [The Clear Pathway guidance](#) encourages best practice in working with third sector partners to engage volunteers in NHS settings and has been in use since April 2018. It is designed to support health boards to manage the risks and capitalise on the opportunities associated with third sector volunteering so that it is always safe, effective and person-centred, in line with the quality ambitions of NHSScotland.

The Scottish Government commissioned VHS to explore good practice and lessons learned since the publication of the Clear Pathway guidance to further support the relationship between health boards and third sector to manage and provide safe volunteering within our health settings. It is encouraging to see that the awareness of the guidance amongst health boards is high. But there is more that can be done and the recommendations in the report highlight specific areas of work to focus on to ensure safe environment for patients and volunteers. I would therefore welcome your support in disseminating [the evaluation report](#) and the [Clear Pathway guidance](#) within your organisations and with your third sector partners.

Please note that the evaluation project was undertaken before the outbreak of COVID-19 and therefore it is important to consider the findings of the report in the light of the implications of the pandemic on the way the current NHS services have had to adapt in order to protect the people of Scotland.

I understand that this has been an exceptional time for health boards and volunteers and that many of the volunteering activity has been paused due to COVID-19 restrictions and to keep volunteers and the wider public safe. I would like to extend my gratitude to all volunteers, and also to those who were unable to volunteer during this time. The importance and value of volunteers in health and social care is undeniable both in the response to the pandemic and in normal times.

Shared practice and guidance for volunteer management in NHSScotland

The safety of patients, staff and volunteers who work within and for the NHS in Scotland is a priority for the Scottish Government and for NHSScotland. The Volunteering in NHSScotland programme with support from the National Group for Volunteering continues to provide the most up to date '**Shared practice and guidance for volunteer management in NHSScotland**', available on [HIS - Community Engagement website](#). This document is shared with Executive and Strategic Leads for Volunteering and volunteer managers on a regular basis and provides a range of guidance and practice, drawing from developments across NHSScotland and beyond to support more rapid spread of practice with a focus on safety and retaining the integrity of volunteering.

Finally, to ensure the effective and appropriate distribution of further communication in relation to volunteering, I ask health boards to confirm their local governance arrangements of Executive, Strategic Leads and deputies with the Volunteering in NHSScotland programme within Healthcare Improvement Scotland – Community Engagement. This can be done by contacting the Volunteering in NHSScotland team at info@hisengage.scot by 31 October. Current arrangements can be found at www.hisengage.scot/volunteering.

If you have any questions about the information outlined above, please contact: Jolanta Lisicka at the Scottish Government, t: 07919 565 295, email: Jolanta.Lisicka@gov.scot; or Alan Bigham, Programme Manager (Volunteering) at Healthcare Improvement Scotland: Community Engagement, t: 07881 878087, email: alan.bigham@nhs.net.

Yours sincerely



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NATIONAL CLINICAL DIRECTOR