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**Chief Nursing Officer Directorate**

Professor Amanda Croft, Chief Nursing Officer

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Dear Colleague

**NHS SCOTLAND ASSURE: QUALITY IN THE HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT**

On 1 June 2021, a new service, NHS Scotland Assure, is launching as part of services delivered by NHS National Services Scotland (NSS).

NHS Scotland Assure has been co-designed with users to deliver a co-ordinated approach to the improvement of risk management in new builds and refurbishment projects across NHS Scotland. The new service will underpin a transformation in our approach to minimising risk in our healthcare buildings and environments, protecting patients from the risk of infection and supporting better outcomes for patients in Scotland.

NHS Scotland Assure, via NSS, is accountable to the Scottish Government, and will provide assurance that the Healthcare Built Environment is safe, fit for purpose, cost effective and capable of delivering sustainable services over the long term. Its relationship with the Scottish Government will be with both the Health Finance, Corporate Governance and Value Directorate and the Chief Nursing Officer's Directorate.

From the 1 June 2021, all NHS Board projects that require review and approval from the NHS Capital Investment Group (CIG), will need to engage with NHS Scotland Assure to undertake key stage assurance reviews (KSARs). Approval from the CIG will only follow once the KSAR has been satisfactorily completed. The KSARs have been designed to provide assurance to the Scottish Government that guidance has been followed. The Scottish Government may also commission NHS Scotland Assure to undertake reviews on other healthcare built environment projects. This does not change accountability for the projects; NHS Boards remain accountable for their delivery. NHS Scotland Assure will be accountable for the services it provides that support delivery of the projects.

**DL(2021) 14  
27 May 2021**

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**Addresses**

For action

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**For information**

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Using the Scottish Approach to Service Design, NSS has designed NHS Scotland Assure as a multi-disciplinary team, with subject matter experts in the fields of infection prevention and control, medical microbiology, specialist engineering, science, hard and soft facilities and building management. NHS Scotland Assure will have close working relations with Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS), National Education Scotland (NES) and Public Health Scotland (PHS), recognising their areas of expertise. It will further develop its connections to other UK and international bodies and services as it develops.

It will undertake a leadership role supporting NHS Boards while they deliver oversight for the design, construction, and maintenance of major infrastructure developments within the NHS. As a quality management system for the healthcare built environment, NHS Scotland Assure will strengthen infection prevention and control and play a crucial guidance role regarding incidents and outbreaks across health and social care.


Due to the impact of the pandemic, the service is launching with a phased approach. At 1 June 2021, the service will launch with its first phase of design completed. The second phase of service design will continue throughout 2021-22 and will see further enhancements developed through the year.

For further information, please contact [nss.NHSScotlandAssure@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.NHSScotlandAssure@nhs.scot)

Your sincerely,



Richard McCallum  
Director of Health Finance and Governance



Professor Amanda Croft  
Chief Nursing Officer

## NHS Scotland Assure: Quality in the Healthcare Environment

### **Background**

NHS National Services Scotland was commissioned by Scottish Government to design and implement a new approach to improve the quality of our healthcare environment. This was outlined in the 2019/2020 Programme for Government in response to issues identified in the built environment of new hospitals in Scotland.

*“To ensure patient safety we will create a new national body to strengthen infection prevention and control, including in the built environment. The body will have oversight for the design, construction and maintenance of major infrastructure developments within the NHS and also play a crucial policy and guidance role regarding incidents and outbreaks across health and social care.”*

NHS Scotland Assure has been formed to promote confidence that the NHS estate is safe and of high quality.

### **Scope**

Arrangements for quality in the healthcare built environment are changing in Scotland. NHS Scotland Assure and its functions are for all NHS health and care environments, and cover the full lifecycle of a build. Infection prevention and other infrastructure harm prevention measures will be designed at the very outset of the planning, design and construction stages of a healthcare facility and maintained thereafter. NHS Scotland Assure will consider risks as they relate to the built environment.

### **Aims and objectives**

Using the Scottish Approach to Service Design and involving service users through the process, NHS Scotland Assure has been designed to improve the management of risk in the built environment across Scotland, providing greater confidence to stakeholders.

The buildings and environment we deliver healthcare in play a large part in preventing and controlling the risk of transmission of infection and other harms. It's essential our buildings are safe, resilient and not vulnerable to these risks; where these can be prevented. NHS Scotland Assure will work collaboratively with NHS Boards to make sure our buildings are compliant with best available evidence in all aspects of safety, and systems are designed and built to be safe at the point of initiation of services.

### **Quality Management System Approach**

NHS Scotland Assure adopts the Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) Quality Management System and will deliver Quality Assurance for risk management in the built environment through:

- **Planning** - Intelligence capabilities enabling a preventative approach to managing risk.
- **Assurance and Control** - Collaborative working with Health Boards to ensure they are compliant with Guidance.
- **Improvement** - Research and the production of evidence based guidance.

### **Key functions**

Consisting of five key functions, NHS Scotland Assure is designed to align to the Healthcare Improvement Scotland Quality Management framework.

- National leadership and strategy
- Planned lifecycle support
- System capacity and capability
- Intelligence and knowledge sharing
- System response

With an overarching leadership role, NHS Scotland Assure represents NHS Scotland's work to manage risk in the built environment at a national level and influence the development of new policy.

## **Governance**

Alongside building robust relationships across the system, NHS Scotland Assure and NHS Boards will jointly sign off key stage assurance reviews (KSARs) at relevant stages of projects. NHS Boards are required to engage with NHS Scotland Assure in this process.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) will continue inspections of NHS Hospitals and services through the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate (HEI). NHS Scotland Assure will work with HIS to ensure inspections carried out by the HEI are supported by relevant expertise.

NHS Scotland Assure will form a strategic partnership with National Education Scotland to deliver the workforce education development service and will collaborate with PHS to share intelligence and expertise.

NHS Scotland Assure is accountable to the Scottish Government. Through shared commitment to transparency and accountability, assurance will be provided that the healthcare built environment is compliant with the best available evidence in all aspects of safety, is fit for purpose, cost effective and capable of delivering sustainable services over the long term.

NHS Scotland Assure will provide a structured forum that will enable construction, facilities professionals and clinical colleagues to work in an integrated manner to ensure that the healthcare built environment is safe, fit for purpose, cost effective and capable of delivering sustainable services over the long term.

By reducing risk in the healthcare-built environment to the lowest possible level through enhanced and new services, NHS Scotland Assure will unite stakeholder groups across sectors to minimise risk and improve quality across NHS Scotland's estate, increasing patient safety.

## **Services**

NHS Scotland Assure consists of eight new services, supporting the management of risk in healthcare builds across Scotland. For some services, elements are already delivered across the system, and where this is the case, enhancements will be made.

Due to the impact of the pandemic, the service is launching with a phased approach. At 1st June 2021, the service will launch with its first phase of design completed. The second design phase throughout 2021/22 will see further development of the service

Please see our website for the latest information about these services.

## **Contact Us**

Further information on the service can be found at: <https://www.nss.nhs.scot> or please email us at: [nss.NHSScotlandAssure@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.NHSScotlandAssure@nhs.scot)

