

A **Blueprint** for Health Records Research in Scotland

APPENDIX 8

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS FOR SAFE HAVENS AND GOVERNING BODIES TO ASK THEMSELVES¹

Good governance means focusing on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and users

- How clear are we about what we are trying to achieve as an organisation? Do we always have this at the front of our minds when we are planning or taking decisions? How well are we doing in achieving our intended outcomes?
- To what extent does the information that we have about the quality of service for users help us to make rigorous decisions about improving quality? Do we receive regular and comprehensive information on users' views of quality? How could this information be improved? How effectively do we use this information when we are planning and taking decisions?
- To what extent does the information that we have on costs and performance help us to make rigorous decisions about improving value for money? How effectively do we use this information when we are planning and taking decisions? How well do we understand how the value we provide compares with that of similar organisations?

Good governance means performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles

- Do we all know what we are supposed to be doing?
- Is our approach to each of the governing body's main functions clearly set out and understood by all in the governing body and the senior executive? What does the size and complexity of our organisation mean for the ways in which we approach each of the main functions of governance?
- How clearly have we defined the respective roles and responsibilities of the non-executives and the executive, and of the chair and the chief executive? Do all members of the governing body take collective responsibility for the governing body's decisions?
- How well does the organisation understand the views of the public and service users? Do we receive comprehensive and reliable information about these views and do we use it in decision making?

¹ From the Langlands report: The Good Governance Standard for Public Services
http://www.cipfa.org.uk/pt/download/governance_standard.pdf

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Good governance means promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour

- What are the values that we expect the staff to demonstrate in their behaviour and actions? How well are these values reflected in our approach to decision making? What more should we do to ensure these values guide our actions and those of staff?
- In what ways does our behaviour, collectively as a governing body and individually as governors, show that we take our responsibilities to the organisation and its stakeholders very seriously? Are there any ways in which our behaviour might weaken the organisation's aims and values?

Good governance means taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk

- How well do our meetings work? What could we do to make them more productive and do our business more effectively?
- Have we formally agreed on the types of decisions that are delegated to the executive and those that are reserved for the governing body? Is this set out in a clear and up-to-date statement? How effective is this as a guide to action for the governing body and the executive? How well do we explain the reasons for our decisions to all those who might be affected by them?
- Is the information we receive robust and objective? How could the information we receive be improved to help improve our decision making? Do we take professional advice to inform and support our decision making when it is sensible and appropriate to do so?
- How effective is the organisation's risk management system? How do we review whether this system is working effectively? Do we develop an action plan to correct any deficiencies in the systems? If so, do we publish this each year?

Good governance means developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective

- What skills have we decided that governors must have to do their jobs effectively? How well does our recruitment process identify people with the necessary skills and reach people from a wide cross-section of society? What more could we do to make sure that becoming a governor is practical for as many people as possible?
- How effective are we at developing our skills and updating our knowledge? How effective are our arrangements for reviewing the performance of individual governors? Do we put into practice action plans for improving our performance as a governing body?

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- What is our approach to finding a balance between continuity of knowledge and renewal of thinking in the governing body? What are our reasons for this approach? Do we need to review it?

Good governance means engaging stakeholders and making accountability real

- Who are we accountable to and for what? How well does each of these accountability relationships work? Do we need to take steps to clarify or strengthen any relationships? Do we need to negotiate a shift in the balance between different accountability relationships?
- What is our policy on how the organisation should consult the public and service users? Does it explain clearly the sorts of issues on which it will consult which groups and how it will use the information it receives? Do we need to review this policy and its implementation?
- What is our policy on consulting and involving staff and their representatives in decision making? Is this communicated clearly to staff? How well do we follow this in practice? How effective are systems within the organisation for protecting the rights of staff?
- Who are the institutional stakeholders that we need to have good relationships with? How do we organise ourselves to take the lead in developing relationships with other organisations at the most senior level?

Applying the good governance Standard

- To what extent does the *Good Governance Standard for Public Services*² apply to our organisation, bearing in mind its type and size?
- Are we upholding and demonstrating the spirit and ethos of good governance that the Standard sets out to capture?
- Do we have a process for regularly reviewing our governance arrangements and practice against the Standard? What further improvements do we need to make?
- Are we making public the results of our reviews and our plans for future improvements and are we inviting feedback from stakeholders and service users?

² http://www.cipfa.org.uk/pt/download/governance_standard.pdf