



Department of Health Departmental Board

Terms of Reference

Departmental Board

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Prepared by Jacqueline Benedetti

DH Departmental Board Terms of Reference

Role of the Departmental Board

Purpose

The Departmental Board (DB) supports the Permanent Secretary in the discharge of his responsibilities as Principal Accounting Officer, within the framework of priorities set by the Secretary of State. The DB was constituted in its current form in October 2007, following the Capability Review of the Department of Health, which recommended that steps be taken to strengthen the Department's corporate governance structures.

Functions

Within the framework set by the Secretary of State the Departmental Board is responsible for:

- Setting the Department's standards and values;
- Establishing the framework of governance, assurance and management of risk;
- Developing co-ordinated advice to Ministers on the strategy and objectives for the health and social care system;
- Advising on the overall disposition and allocation of resources in support of delivery of the strategy;
- Monitoring delivery of Departmental Strategy Objectives, Public Service Agreements and financial objectives and advising on remedial action where necessary.

Matters reserved to the Departmental Board

- Approval of the Departmental Business Plan
- Approval of the Resource Accounts
- Approval of the Departmental Report
- Approval of major expenditure commitments as defined in scheme of delegations
- Remuneration of senior staff (DG and above)

Membership

Permanent Secretary (Chair)

NHS Chief Executive

Chief Medical Officer

Director General, Social Care, Local Government and Care Partnerships

Directors General for Finance and Chief Operating Officer

Three Non-Executive Directors

Other Attendees

The Board will also be attended by relevant officials providing secretariat support. The Board Secretariat function is provided by the Head of the Governance Branch, and the Governance Unit Manager.

Others may also be invited to attend Board meetings to present papers or address specific issues.

Conflicts of Interest

Any member of the Board with a prejudicial interest in a particular item will declare this and, if appropriate, will leave the meeting for that discussion. Board members are required to keep a record on the Department's Declarations of Interest and Hospitality Database to record any potential conflicts of interest.

Approach

The Departmental Board will operate as follows.

Agenda

The Secretariat will manage a forward programme of items for discussion at future Departmental Board meetings. The forward programme will be circulated as a paper for information at each meeting.

Items on the agenda must be 'sponsored' by a Board member, and papers submitted to the Board must be signed off by the Board sponsor.

The Board Secretariat will work with the Permanent Secretary to finalise the agenda, its order and timings. Approved agendas will be put onto the DB page on Delphi in advance of each meeting.

Board Papers

Items on the agenda will be accompanied by a Board paper, cleared by the sponsoring Board member. Board papers will be completed on a template provided by the Secretariat, and will set out the issue and action required by the Board, provide supporting background information and articulate the arguments for any options that are being presented. Papers will be circulated at least 5 working days in advance of meetings.

Minutes and record of decisions

The Chair will summarise, at the end of each item, what has been agreed and what action is needed. The Secretariat will circulate an action note following each meeting and will monitor its progress. An updated action note will be produced for each meeting outlining the progress against each action from the previous meetings actions.

Draft minutes of each Departmental Board meeting will be produced and circulated to Board members, and Director Generals. Minutes will be formally approved at the subsequent meeting.

Openness

Key issues for staff will be communicated through corporate communication channels – the Permanent Secretary’s Monthly Update, team managers bulletin, Face to Face briefing, and/or Delphi – as appropriate.

Summary minutes will be posted on the DH website and Delphi 3 months after each meeting.

Boards and Committees

The Departmental board is supported by the following Boards and Committees with defined responsibilities for areas of the Department’s business:

Corporate Management Board (CMB)

The Corporate Management Board (CMB) provides corporate leadership for the Department and supports the Permanent Secretary in the discharge of his personal responsibility as Accounting Officer for Departmental expenditure.

NHS Management Board and Executive Groups

This Board supports the NHS Chief Executive in his responsibility as Accounting Officer for NHS expenditure and provides leadership for the NHS ensuring effective two-way communication, manages NHS performance and shapes policy and strategy for the NHS.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee advises the Accounting Officers and the Departmental Board on risk management, corporate governance and assurance arrangements in the Department and its subsidiary bodies.

Performance Committee (PC)

This committee monitors performance against Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs), Public Service Agreements (PSAs), Value for Money (VfM), critical programmes and projects and financial targets on behalf of the Department Board and provides a source of challenge on these to supporting PSA and VfM Boards.

Committee of the Regions

This Committee of the Department's Board supports the DH presence in the regions in respect of the delivery of local health and social care.

Equality & Human Rights Assurance Group

The Committee oversees the Department's performance against the Single Equality Scheme action plan and, through that, compliance with equality legislation on behalf of the Departmental Board, and provides a source of challenge across the Department.

Frequency of meetings

The DB will normally meet in formal session five times each year with the timetable of meetings structured around the business cycle. Special meetings and away days will be arranged when required.

The Role of Non-Executive Directors (NEDs)

The Departmental Board currently has three NEDs (Mike Wheeler, Julie Baddeley and Jon Rouse) as members. The NEDs contribute to and review the strategic direction of DB by:

- providing constructive challenge in the policy formulation process;
- providing a critical overview of the Department's financial controls, and risk assessment and management; and
- monitoring performance and progress of the Department including the use of human and financial resource.

The NEDs also:

- get involved in work outside of and in-between DB meetings – for example assurance of compliance with cross-government imperatives (e.g. Equality and Human Rights), and capability development ; and
- support the assessment of the Board or individual members' effectiveness.

The NEDs also sit on the delegated Boards and Committees of the DB – for example the Audit Committee and the Performance Committee.