

Over a third of Scottish health boards officially on the brink of financial crisis

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Over a third of Scotland's health boards have been escalated to 'Stage 3 or above' of the NHS Board Performance Escalation Framework which means they need specific interventions, with one unable to deliver effective care.

In a letter to a Holyrood committee, the Chief Executive of NHS Scotland, Paul Gray, confirmed that there are five Health Boards currently classified as Stage 3 or above in the NHS Board Performance Escalation Framework.

The NHS Board Performance Escalation Framework outlines the stages from 1 to 5 that categorises all NHS Boards, with 1 being acceptable and 5 where a Board is operating under ministerial intervention due to significant difficulty.

NHS Boards should be operating at Stage 1 or at a 'steady state'. Stage 5 represents a Board in the most serious stages of difficulty, that has an 'organisational structure or configuration, which is unable to deliver effective care'.

One board, NHS Tayside is classified as Stage 5, two boards, NHS Highland and NHS Borders are at Stage 4 and NHS Ayrshire and Arran and NHS Forth Valley are both at stage 3.

While three of these health boards, Tayside, Highland and Borders, are well known to have significant difficulties, it has not been widely reported that NHS Ayrshire and Arran, and NHS Forth Valley are also classified at Stage 3 escalation.

Both health boards classified as stage three due to "Significant variation from plan; risks materialising; tailored support required." This requires a response that includes a formal recovery plan agreed with the Scottish Government.

NHS Highland and NHS Borders are classed as Stage 4. This is defined as "Significant risks to delivery, quality, financial performance or safety; senior level external support required." This requires a transformation team

which reports directly to the Director General and CEO NHS Scotland.

Currently only NHS Tayside is at stage 5, the most extreme escalation which gives ministers powers of intervention due to the severity of the situation.

The Scottish Conservatives have therefore accused the SNP of woeful mismanagement of the Scottish NHS as many health boards are on the brink of financial crisis.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said;

“Over a third of Scottish health boards are now regarded as being in significant trouble, deviating from their own plans and in need of support.

“This shows that five Scottish health boards are officially on the brink of financial crisis.

“The fact is that NHS Tayside has now been escalated to stage five on the escalation framework, despite SNP government intervention.

“After 11 years of the SNP mismanaging our health service we now have over a third of our health boards unable to operate properly or meet the needs of their communities.

“Indeed, SNP financial mismanagement of our Scottish NHS has seen SNP Ministers forced to write off £150 million of NHS debt.

“Yet again the SNP has shown that it cannot continue to be trusted with our health service.”