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23 August 2022

Dear Convenor,

I am writing to advise the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee that I have taken the decision, with clinical input to stand down the Clinical Prioritisation Framework that has been in place since November 2020. This was developed to provide NHS Boards with guidance around prioritising their planned care waiting lists throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

As noted in my previous letter dated 6 July 2022, I have announced new and ambitious targets to eliminate long waits for planned care, that will require a strong focussed approach to successfully achieve them. There is no doubt the impact that long waiting times can have on a patient, from both a clinical and mental health perspective and as we move to stabilise and recover our planned care services, long waiting patients must now also be considered a priority.

Given this, we permanently stepped down the Clinical Prioritisation Framework on Friday 22 July 2022, allowing Health Boards to return to a pre-pandemic approach of treating patients on an urgent and routine basis. This will give full flexibility to both Health Boards and clinicians to manage their waiting lists, as they have done for years, with a focus on eliminating long waits as well as continuing to treat the most clinically urgent patients.

A letter has also been issued to Board Chief Executives on 22 July 2022, setting out the direction of travel. This included a communication template for patients that should be immediately implemented to explain the changes and what this means for scheduling of their appointment.

As recommended by Audit Scotland in 2021, PHS continue to work with Health Boards on data collection for clinical prioritisation. In the interests of being open and transparent, it is intended that PHS will continue with their plans to publish this data, covering the period up to 30 June 2022. Since clinical prioritisation data will no longer be collected from now onwards, this will be a one off publication only.

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I look forward to updating the Committee on our progress towards meeting these targets in the near future.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Yousaf', is centered on a white rectangular background.

**HUMZA YOUSAF**

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