Board Meetings – Live Streaming

Reference: 10B.017

Board Meeting: 22 February 2010

Agenda Item 12

NHS Direct

Summary	All NHS Trusts and many Foundation Trusts hold their Board meetings in public. Offering live streaming of NHS Direct Board meetings has the potential to improve public access to our Trust Board meetings. It would enhance our public accountability by making meetings more accessible. However, the virtual presence of an unknown number of observers may have a detrimental effect on the meeting dynamic and clearly for it to be useful the quality of the stream must be good. It's considered that the proposal ought not to disrupt Board meetings and it can be set up at a minimal financial cost.
Issues to be considered	Whether Board meetings should be streamed and the likely impact on Board behaviour.
Action required	To agree to Board meetings being streamed for a pilot period of six months.
Accountable Director	Joanne Shaw, Chair
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Date Prepared	10/02/10

1. Background

1.1. NHS Trusts are required to hold their Board meetings in public. This allows local people to observe the Board and ensure public visibility and accountability in decision making.

1.2. Unlike most NHS Trusts, NHS Direct is a national organisation with a local outlook. It is therefore more challenging for public and staff members to attend Board meetings. Live streaming of the meeting through the web is a way to provide open access to all, without rotating the Board through different geographic venues.

1.3. Using live streaming will not involve recording the Board (which might cause legal complications). No other permanent record of the Board meeting will exist other than minutes. It will allow anyone with internet access who wishes to see (and hear) the Board meetings do so. Providing the option to members of the public from across the country to observe the Board meetings enhances our local presence and outlook.

1.4. Access to meetings is made easier by making them available on any pc connected to the web – which puts NHS Direct at the forefront of public accountability.

2. Implementing the proposal

2.1. A simple technical solution involving one camera and a hired streaming service is being proposed. This has the following benefits:

- it is cost effective, involving minimal investment (£10k for the first year)
- it doesn't require the presence of technicians and intrusive equipment that might impede the Board
- it offers the same view on the web as a member of the public would have from sitting in the meeting itself

2.2. There will be some changes required to the format of the Board (such as legal requirements for informing participants that they are being filmed; the need to keep sensitive material off camera and to avoid making comments in the margins of the meeting that may be picked up).

2.3. The streaming options being proposed would give scope to have Q&A sessions or show presentations on the web, but it is not planned to introduce these initially.

3. Issues for Board to consider

- Does it offer a significant improvement in public accountability?
- Is streaming the Board meeting like to affect behaviour or the quality of discussion?

4. Action for Board

4.1. The Board is asked to agree that Board meetings should be live streamed from March for a trial period of six months, after which the impact will be evaluated and a decision made about continuation.

James Bufford
Interim Head of Governance
February 2010