

- To:
- NHS Accountable Emergency Officers
  - ICB Accountable Emergency Officers
  - NHS England:
    - Regional Directors
    - Regional Directors of Performance and Improvement
    - Regional Directors of Performance
    - Regional Heads of EPRR
  - LHRP co-chairs

NHS England  
Wellington House  
133-155 Waterloo Road  
London  
SE1 8UG

**23 May 2023**

- cc.
- Mike Prentice, National Director for Emergency Planning and Incident Response
  - NHS England Business Continuity Team
  - CSU managing directors
  - Clara Swinson, Director General for Global and Public Health, Department of Health and Social Care
  - Emma Reed, Director of Emergency Preparedness and Health Protection Policy Global and Public Health Group, DHSC

Dear colleagues,

## **Emergency preparedness, resilience and response (EPRR) annual assurance process for 2023/24**

Many thanks to you and your teams for your continued leadership and focus on the delivery of patient care during what has been another challenging year. Amongst the backdrop of a number of concurrent issues, not least the ongoing industrial action, whilst delivering a major recovery plan for urgent and emergency care service, the ability of the NHS to remain resilient and responsive over a sustained period is due to our collective commitment to emergency preparedness, resilience and response (EPRR).

NHS England is responsible for gaining assurance on the preparedness of the NHS to respond to incidents and emergencies, while maintaining the ability to remain resilient and continue to deliver critical services. This is achieved through the EPRR annual assurance process.

The process last year returned us to many of the previous mechanisms following a reduced process in the previous years, due to demands on the NHS. It was also the first time since the introduction of the Health and Care Act 2022 which established Integrated Care Boards as Category 1 responder organisations in the CCA (2004) and as local health system leaders. It is hoped that this year’s process will build on these experiences by developing robust local processes for undertaking organisational self-assessments against the core standards and agree the processes to gain confidence with organisational ratings.

This letter notifies you of the start of the 2023/24 EPRR assurance process and the initial actions for organisations to take.

### **Core standards**

The NHS core standards for EPRR are the basis of the assurance process. This year Domain 10 (CBRN) of the core standards have been reviewed and will also incorporate updated interoperable capabilities standards. The refreshed core standards can be found in the NHS core standards for EPRR self-assessment tool.

You are asked to undertake a self-assessment against the individual core standards relevant to your organisation type and rate your compliance for each.

The compliance level for each standard is defined as:

<b>Compliance level</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Fully compliant	Fully compliant with the core standard.
Partially compliant	Not compliant with the core standard. The organisation’s EPRR work programme demonstrates evidence of progress and an action plan is in place to achieve full compliance within the next 12 months.
Non-compliant	Not compliant with the core standard. In line with the organisation’s EPRR work programme, compliance will not be reached within the next 12 months.

### **Deep dive**

Following key themes and common health risks raised as part of last year’s annual assurance process, the 2023/24 EPRR annual deep dive will focus on EPRR responder

training. Training is a fundamental element of embedding resilience within organisations as part of the cycle of emergency planning.

The deep dive questions are applicable to those organisations indicated in the NHS core standards for EPRR self assessment tool.

The outcome of the deep dive will be used to identify areas of good practice and further development whilst seeking additional assurance in this area of the core standards and guide organisations in the development of local arrangements.

### **Organisational assurance rating**

The number of core standards applicable to each organisation type is different. The overall EPRR assurance rating is based on the percentage of core standards the organisations assess itself as being ‘fully compliant’ with. This is explained in more detail below:

<b>Organisational rating</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Fully	The organisation is fully compliant against 100% of the relevant NHS EPRR Core Standards
Substantial	The organisation is fully compliant against 89-99% of the relevant NHS EPRR Core Standards
Partial	The organisation is fully compliant against 77-88% of the relevant NHS EPRR Core Standards
Non-compliant	The organisation is fully compliant up to 76% of the relevant NHS EPRR Core Standards

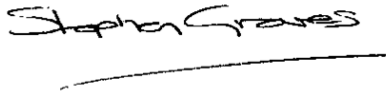
### **Action to take/next steps:**

- All NHS organisations should undertake a self-assessment against the 2023 updated core standards (attached) relevant to their organisation. The outcome from this should then be taken and discussed at a public board or, for organisations that do not hold public boards, be published in their annual report.
- ICBs are required to work with their commissioned organisations and LHRP partners to agree a process to gain confidence with organisational ratings and provide an environment that promotes the sharing of learning and good practice. This process should be agreed with the NHS England regional head of EPRR.
- NHS England regional heads of EPRR and their teams are to work with ICBs to agree a process to obtain organisation-level assurance ratings and provide an environment that promotes the sharing of learning and good practice across their region.

- NHS England regional heads of EPRR are to submit the assurance ratings for each of their organisations and a description of their regional process to myself before Friday 29 December 2023.

If you have any queries, please contact your ICB EPRR Lead or regional head of EPRR in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Groves". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

**Stephen Groves**

Director of NHS Resilience (National)

NHS England