

From: National Guardian's Office <REDACTED>

Subject: RE: FOI request National Guardian's financed and expanded Accountability and Liaison Board

Date: 29 September 2023 at 12:41:03 BST

To: Minh Alexander <REDACTED>

Dear Dr Alexander,

Thank you for your email to the office.

The National Guardian's Office (NGO) has considered your request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

The NGO is hosted by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which is the data controller for the purpose of data protection law. Please see the link to the main privacy notice on the CQC's website for further details here: [Privacy statement - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](#).

More information about the NGO can be found here: <https://nationalguardian.org.uk/about-us/>.

For ease of response, we have detailed your questions and our answers below:

1. The annual financial accounts of the National Guardian's Office (NGO) since inception

The NGO does not have a set of annual accounts, as they are consolidated into CQC's. However, in order to answer your question and to also provide an answer to question 3, please find attached a PDF detailing the spend for each financial year since 2016/2017 and up to the last full financial year of 2022/2023.

2. The NGO annual budget for each of the years since inception

This information is publicly available and can be found in each of our annual reports on our website here: <https://nationalguardian.org.uk/about-us/>. Our latest annual report for 2022/2023 will be released shortly.

3. The percentage of spending since the Office's inception on:

- a) staff costs**
- b) sponsoring Health Service Journal awards and placing paid-for articles/ other content in the Health Service Journal**
- c) any other external comms spending**
- d) hosting conferences**
- d) all other operational costs - please breakdown the areas of spending**

As detailed above, this information can be found in the attached PDF. However, it should be noted that:

- Non pay overheads relate to internal recharging, which would cover our accommodation costs and Service Level Agreement with CQC for Shared Services (HR, IT, Legal and Governance, Finance).
 - The costs for the Health Service Journal in the 2017/2018 year were paid in the 2018/2019 year, which will explain the percentage change.
 - Public Relations Expenses is the category used to cover external comms spending, which includes filming for Guardian training modules and costs for survey work.
4. **Is the NGO able to disclose what proportion of the Office's resources have been devoted to conducting Speak Up case reviews since the Office's inception?**

We do not hold this information, as we don't track costs against specific activities of the office in a way which would enable us to identify the specifics of your question.

However, since the NGO's inception, the office has had one FTE member of staff devoted to the case review and Speak Up review programme. The NGO works in a matrix management way, therefore colleagues from the office would have contributed to parts of both case reviews and Speak Up reviews as required.

5. **Please disclose the reasons for expanding the membership of the Accountability and Liaison board (ALB), including the decision to appoint an independent chair and to add a representative from the DHSC. Who made these decisions? Please disclose any relevant correspondence with the Department of Health and Social Care relating to DHSC representation on the ALB, and the rationale for this. Please disclose the process by which the independent Chair of the ALB was appointed. Was this a competitive process? Was the position advertised? Is there remuneration for the position and if so, what? Is there a job description for the position of Chair of the ALB? If so, please disclose.**

Following a CQC review of the NGO's Governance arrangements and an internal governance review in 2021, a recommendation was made to Accountability and Liaison Board (ALB) members to expand the membership. At a workshop on 12th January 2022, wider membership was discussed, and it was agreed that funding partners should be represented by both Non-Executive and Executive members with representation from NHSE/I (now known as NHSE), CQC and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

In addition, the decision was taken to appoint an independent chair, recognising that an independent chair would:

- improve corporate governance through independent oversight;
- provide dedicated time and support for the National Guardian at Board level events such as CQC Board, NHSE Board;

- provide an independent, objective voice for the NGO, with effective and productive challenge, ensuring the delivery of its core functions and responsibilities;
- promote a collaborative approach to ensure that partner organisations cooperate and effectively safeguard and promote the Freedom to Speak Up agenda, calling partners to account when this is not achieved;
- and ensuring that the voice of workers is heard through their participation and feedback in all work undertaken by the board and sub-committees.

The independent chair was appointed following an open recruitment process which was managed by an external recruitment agency. They are paid £8000 per annum plus reasonable travel expenses necessarily incurred while undertaking the role. This is for an annual time commitment of 24 days which includes preparation for and attendance at meetings, travel and dealing with issues outside of meetings by correspondence, plus attendance at some other external events.

The job description for the role, also known as the person specification, is:

- Experience in leadership in the public, private or nonprofit sector, working successfully with executives and non-executives to take forward the strategic direction of a small, complex organisation.
- Demonstrable and substantial experience as a board member or board chair as well as a strong background in finance, risk, regulation, IT, or business planning and business processes.
- A successful track record of managing relationships and influencing with a complex range of stakeholders in an environment where decisions are under internal and external scrutiny.
- Political awareness and the ability to inspire confidence and work collaboratively in a high-profile environment.
- A broad understanding of the public sector environment, particularly with respect to accountability, as well as a strong commitment to equal opportunities, diversity, public service values and the principles of public life.
- Demonstrable interest in the health and social care sector.

Thank you again for contacting the National Guardian's Office.

Advice and assistance

Under section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (and in accordance with the section 45 code of practice) we have a duty to provide you with reasonable advice and assistance.

If you need any independent advice about individual's rights under information legislation you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO is the UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals. The contact details for the ICO are detailed below.

There is useful information on the ICO website explaining the rights of individuals: www.ico.org.uk/your-data-matters .

NGO Complaints and Internal Review procedure

If you are unhappy with how the NGO has handled your request for information, you can ask us to conduct an internal review by emailing information.access@cqc.org.uk. You can find more information about how we handle personal data and your rights at <https://nationalguardian.org.uk/privacy-policy/>.

You also have a right to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for independent review. You can find further information and contact details at www.ico.org.uk.

Kind regards,

Ellie Staite (She/her)
Correspondence, Accountability and Governance Manager
National Guardian's Office
REDACTED
0191 249 4400 (between 10am – 2pm)
<https://www.nationalguardian.org.uk/>

Please find our Privacy Statement [here](#)



From: Minh Alexander <REDACTED>
Sent: Saturday, September 9, 2023 9:11 AM
To: National Guardian's Office <REDACTED>
Subject: FOI request National Guardian's financed and expanded Accountability and Liaison Board

Dear Sir,

FOI request National Guardian's financed and expanded Accountability and Liaison Board

Please disclose:

1. The annual financial accounts of the National Guardian's Office (NGO) since inception
2. The NGO annual budget for each of the years since inception
3. The percentage of spending since the Office's inception on:
 - a) staff costs

- b) sponsoring Health Service Journal awards and placing paid-for articles/ other content in the Health Service Journal
- c) any other external comms spending
- d) hosting conferences
- d) all other operational costs - please breakdown the areas of spending

4. Is the NGO able to disclose what proportion of the Office's resources have been devoted to conducting Speak Up case reviews since the Office's inception?

Please disclose the reasons for expanding the membership of the Accountability and Liaison board (ALB), including the decision to appoint an independent chair and to add a representative from the DHSC. Who made these decisions?

Please disclose any relevant correspondence with the Department of Health and Social Care relating to DHSC representation on the ALB, and the rationale for this.

Please disclose the process by which the independent Chair of the ALB was appointed. Was this a competitive process? Was the position advertised?

Is there remuneration for the position and if so, what?

Is there a job description for the position of Chair of the ALB?

If so, please disclose.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Minh Alexander