

Monday 1 December 2025

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**I start this month's blog by thanking health and care staff across Grampian for your continued hard work recognising the sustained pressures on our emergency services, compounded by the recent snow and wintry weather we have seen.**

System flow, particularly flow through and out of ARI remains very challenged. An organisation-wide focus on good discharge practice and early Board Rounds is needed so we can maximise pre-noon discharges and more get movement of patients earlier in the day than we are presently. The cumulative effect of every ward bringing forward discharges, ensuring all patients have accurate Predicted Discharge Dates, is significant on the experience of our emergency patients and their safety. We know there is much more we must do to get consistency of our own internal practices, with over two thirds of discharges post-noon. These are all things we can do to improve the current pressures that are in our own gift to do.

Thanks to your efforts we remain on track at Month 7 (October) to delivery of financial and savings plan for the year, with the results for Month 8 (November) available soon. Whilst delivery is far from a given as we enter our busiest and most challenging months of the year, with continued focus I am confident we can do this - which will be a significant step forward for us when it comes to delivering what we said we would do for the year.

Thanks to your collective efforts, we have spent £1m less on medical agency and £1.8m less on nurse agency compared to this time last year and we have had a strengthened focus on substantive recruitment and grow your own pathways.

Financial planning for 2026/27 is already underway. We are working closely with our local authority and Integration Joint Board teams to ensure we take an integrated approach across the system, doing our best to ensure decisions taken in one part of our system don't inadvertently impact another part of the system, recognising the level of savings we collectively need to make as we look ahead. By working more closely together there are also opportunities to explore and agree transformation and redesign opportunities across Grampian, benefiting the communities we serve, and these conversations have also started.

There have been a number of positive developments also in the planned care space. The First Minister's ask of all Health Boards is to eliminate 52-week waits for patients by the end of March 2026. Whilst our path to zero remains challenging, we can evidence progress. Our plan (based on our current submitted trajectories to Scottish Government) for New Outpatients is to reduce our 52-week waiters from 10,038 to 5,489 by end of March 2026 and our plan for inpatients is to reduce our 52-week waiters from 3,671 to 3,498 by end of March 2026. Whilst the exact impact of the Central Decontamination Unit is being worked through it is expected to be circa 1,000 inpatients. We are exploring and doing all we can do reduce our longest wait patients further recognising the impact of these waits on our patients and their families.

We have benefited from mutual aid support from other Health Boards across Scotland in recent months which will further improve our position. Through a blend of further mutual aid from other Health Boards and a further £500K funding from Scottish Government just confirmed last week which is enabling an independent sector solution to increase capacity (consistent with Dermatology), this will enable further improvements in Urology, one of our most pressured specialties, to do 1,000 New Outpatient appointments by the end of March 2026. This will not only further improve our 52-week wait position but eliminate 104-week waits for NHS Grampian for New Outpatients by the end of March 2026. We are aiming to resubmit our trajectories to the Scottish Government in the coming week which takes account of the negative impact of the CDU shutdown along with the positive impact of mutual aid and independent sector support to put forward a further improved position.

The recently published national iMatter benchmarking results point to where we need to focus our efforts moving forward. We need to not just ask you for feedback, but critically to act on it at both organisational and local level so we improve your experience of working here. Whilst our response rate was better than the national average, action planning within eight weeks improved and our Employee Engagement Index score was consistent with the national average, we need improve in some key areas. These include doing more to support your health and wellbeing, managing performance, Board visibility, and involving you in decision-making which we will do via a number of new and emerging mechanisms which aim to strengthen governance and accountability. As we go into 2026, there will be a bigger and much needed focus on improving staff experience and engagement, and this includes a concerted effort to improve appraisal and statutory and mandatory training rates - because these are indicators that matter to how you feel working here and are about keeping you safe at work. Everyone deserves an annual appraisal conversation with their line manager and we are some way from achieving this presently with less than 1 in five of you having an appraisal. We must and will do better - for you - and I want to recognise this.

Have a good week everyone and thanks for all you are doing for our patients.

Take care

Laura

**Laura Skaife-Knight**  
**Chief Executive**