

Chief Exec's Update



Tuesday 11 November 2025

I share my second blog as I begin my eighth week in post, to reflect on what I've heard, seen and to update you on the progress we're making.

Thank you

First, I have been so impressed with the teams and colleagues I have met so far. Your dedication, commitment, and determination to deliver the best possible patient care is evident in every conversation I have. It is all the more striking when we consider the often difficult and challenging circumstances and environment many are working in and the continued pressures on our system.

Updating on our highest priorities

We are making progress in two of our three priority improvement areas with our value and sustainability, and planned care, programmes heading in the right direction.

Whilst not without its risks, we are getting closer to identifying the entirety of our £62m savings requirement for the year and we are as confident as we can be we will meet our maximum year-end deficit of £45m. This is only possible thanks to your hard work and focus. Now well into the second half of this financial year it is important we remain focused on delivery, recognising the significant step forward achieving our plans would signal for us and confidence this will generate about NHS Grampian. Our consistent approach is to ensure any decision we make is stress tested to understand any impact on patient safety, quality of care, and staff wellbeing before any decision is made. This remains our strong focus as we commence our 20-week planning period for our 2026/26 value and sustainability programme under the leadership of our Medical Director, Dr Hugh Bishop, our Executive Nurse Director, Professor June Brown, and our Director of Public Health, Professor Shantini Paranjothy. They will Chair a regular Quality Impact Assessment panel to ensure we have a robust process in place, with Area Clinical Forum and Area Partnership Forum members being involved and the Clinical Governance Committee seeking assurance in this space.

Turning our attention to the work we are doing to reduce our longest waits and achieve zero 52-week waits by the end of March 2026, consistent with the First Minister's commitment, we continue to make good progress for new outpatients and inpatients. I must note the hard work of teams across the organisation to respond to the temporary closure of the central decontamination unit at Foresterhill. Thank you to everyone who has pulled together so well to respond to this added challenge we have and continue to face with so many examples of colleagues going above and beyond.

Thanks to a combination of £10.6m Scottish Government funding, which is supporting additional capacity, our own internal improvements, mutual aid support from boards across Scotland, and our independent sector solution for dermatology patients, we have made good progress and are on track to deliver our year-end trajectories for planned care.

We have received £6m of national funding to further improve the experience and timeliness of unscheduled care, recognising we do need to see improvements for our patients, many of whom are experiencing unacceptably long waits on a consistent basis. 1 in 2 of our patients wait over the national 4-hour emergency access standard for being treated, and admitted or discharged when attending our Emergency Department and ambulance handover waits are lengthy.

I know we all want to improve the experience for our emergency patients to minimise waits and delays. I also know how hard everyone is working to support the delivery of our whole system improvement plan, which we are in the process of launching and setting up (governance included) so we can very quickly move to delivering the necessary improvements. Central to this plan is shifting the balance of care from hospital to community by investing in more community capacity and services. This includes Hospital at Home, Discharge to Assess, Virtual Beds (Moray), an expansion to our Flow Navigation Centre and introducing a permanent frailty model at the front door, recognising the positive impact of a pilot project. A frailty model at DGH, which is AHP-led, will be introduced too in the hope we can see the impact replicated. We want to ensure more consistency with our internal practices and processes, including discharge planning and experience for our patients (pre-noon discharges and ensuring all patients have Predicted Discharge Dates), early escalation and actions to ensure we maintain flow through and out of our hospitals. We have expanded hospital pharmacy opening hours, have the Flow Navigation Centre in place overnight thanks to GP out of hours support, have expanded RAAC and SDEC opening times, and are out to recruitment for a number of posts central to the delivery of our plan - including Discharge to Assess Teams for Aberdeen City and Shire and AHP weekend cover at ARI.

By working together across the system we will deliver these improvements for our patients, I have every confidence that we will soon see improvements in unscheduled care comparable with those in the other priority areas.

Staying safe this winter

Almost a quarter of you working in health and social care have had your free flu jab already. While this is a slight increase on the same time last year, I really want to see this number increase. Getting vaccinated is one of the ways we can keep ourselves, each other, and our patients safe. You can book your vaccination using the national booking website, [available via this link](#). Details of pop-up clinics and drop-in opportunities are regularly shared in the Daily Brief so keep an eye on that too.

Communications from the CEO

To help keep you well-informed and to ensure there is 2-way communication - these are the main ways I will be keeping in touch with you - which I wanted to share:

1. Ask Laura - bi-monthly - the next session will be recorded this Friday and shared with you next week
2. CEO blog - monthly and will be issued on the first Monday of every month
3. All staff briefing - these will launch in January 2026 - this will be a 30 min all staff Teams update, with me sharing some of the headline messages and you having an opportunity to ask myself and our Executive Team any questions. Everyone is welcome, dates and times will be advertised in the Daily Brief
4. Every month we will provide an update on how we're doing against each of our priority areas – this will start in December (as above)

Celebrating our successes

As I have been out and about speaking to you in recent weeks, we've discussed a lot the importance of balancing our narrative. Being honest about the challenges we face is important. However, so is celebrating and recognising the many great things happening across NHS Grampian, including your many achievements, examples of how you are delivering outstanding care every single day for the communities we serve, and sharing these good news stories with you, our partners and our community.

Among the achievements I want us to celebrate and recognise are:

- Wendy Harper last week winning the Support Worker Award at Scotland's Health Awards. To recognise this national recognition is an incredible achievement and I know we are all very proud of Wendy's achievements.
- We have been shortlisted in the 'Leadership' category at the 2025 Living Wage awards, recognising our commitment to promoting the national Living Wage.
- Our rich streak of innovation work continues, as two of our clinicians – Craig MacKay and George Ramsay – have made the final three of a national competition promoting the development of AI use cases for public services.
- Our Birth Parents project won an award at the Parent Network Scotland awards at the end of last month; well-deserved recognition for this project.

This is just a snapshot; every week on our social media accounts we share your successes and the public reaction to these is heart-warming.

Thank you for all you are doing for our patients. I hope this update is helpful. Do email me directly with any feedback and I will do my best to incorporate this and respond in my next monthly update to you.

Best wishes

Laura

Laura Skaife-Knight
Chief Executive