

Chief Exec's Update



Monday 31 August 2026

Hi everyone

Firstly thank you to you all for your continued hard work. Whilst we talk about Winter Planning, the reality for us now is there is little distinction between seasons when it comes to the demand and pressures on our services.

On Tuesday of last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care visited Dr Gray's Hospital, where she met ambulance staff and staff in our Emergency Department and Maternity Unit. She was impressed with the dedication and commitment of the staff she met, and how we are responding to the unique challenges that rural communities in Scotland, DGH included, face when it comes to accessing high-quality healthcare. I was honest with the Cabinet Secretary that we had not been as proactive as we should have been with our communications with our local community about the pause of paediatric surgery, and committed to doing better moving forward. I look forward to returning to DGH on 18 September, when I will hold my next staff briefing session for staff in the restaurant over lunch, and again on 22 September when the Assurance Board will meet in-person at DGH.

Thank you to everyone who submitted their iMatter Action Plans - our completion rate this year was 72% (against a target of >70%), This compares to 58% last year. This reflects the commitment shown by staff and teams across NHS Grampian to engage in meaningful conversations about their working experiences and identify actions for improvement. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this achievement, which has only been possible through the collective effort we have seen across our organisation.

While the formal reporting period has now closed, I would encourage any teams who have not yet completed an Action Plan to continue these discussions. The value of iMatter lies not in the submission itself, but in the conversations teams have about what is working well and where improvements can be made. This is all about improving your experience of working here. All we ask for is one priority area per team to focus on in the year ahead.

Finally, we turn our attention to appraisals, one of our priorities for 2026/27, recognising we are far from where we need to be. Our current organisational appraisal rate is at just 28.2% against the minimum 38% target we are aiming for by the end of March 2027. Every member of staff deserves an annual appraisal and in turn an opportunity to have a conversation with their line manager to discuss individual priorities for the year ahead, personal development plans and support needed to deliver personal objectives, as well as an opportunity to get some feedback and to ask questions. This is the minimum I expect, and mid-year reviews should routinely happen too as should regular 121s and team meetings throughout the year. This is good practice. There are currently 14.6% appraisals 'in progress' (incomplete on Turas) and 57.2% appraisals not even started which simply isn't good enough (the reality is over half of our staff have not even started an appraisal conversation).

I am asking every line manager to give appraisals the focus they need, ensuring your line reports have appraisals booked. Medical colleagues looking for support should contact gram.appraisal@nhs.scot; Agenda for Change staff requiring appraisal support should contact the Wellbeing, Culture and Development team via gram.wcd@nhs.scot

This is not optional, rather it is a critical and essential part of your role as a line manager at NHS Grampian which influences and impacts on what staff feel and think about working here ie: staff experience at NHS Grampian. If as a line manager you are not giving appraisals for your line reports due attention, you now need to and seek support if this is needed - given this is a key part of your role as a leader and line manager.

Thanks for all you are doing - please know it is appreciated.

Best wishes

Laura

Laura Skaife-Knight
Chief Executive