

Chief Exec's Update



Monday 3 August 2026

Hi All

I start with a thank you recognising Friday was a challenging day due to the hot water issues on the Foresterhill site. Thank you to everyone who supported our response to this, including our on-call teams, and to our Estates and Infrastructure colleagues for the repair works. A special thanks to our Catering and Ward Teams to ensure there was no impact on patient care, including by quickly adjusting the menus and using plastic cutlery to ensure patient meals were unaffected. This was a real team effort - thank you.

We are now well and truly into Quarter 2 of the year (July-September) and it is therefore timely to reflect on how we did in Quarter 1. Getting off to the best possible start each financial year is vital, especially to build on the progress we made during 2025/26 - which I absolutely know we can and will do.

Our scorecard for Quarter 1 shows mixed results. This is not because of lack of effort - far from it, as I see people working above and beyond every single day - rather because we are responding to a number of difficult challenges and I know it's a big ask to do and deliver everything at once. I am a realist. Small improvements in each of our priority areas, however, is realistic and what I want us to focus on so we can continue to see incremental improvement that is sustainable, which is important.

What I do know is that even with our mixed results, we continue to move forward, which is all I can ask for recognising the pressures in the system.

With our People, Leadership and Governance, Prevention, and Value and Sustainability strategic priorities we are largely on track. With unscheduled care, planned care, and clinical quality and safety we have much work in progress. More traction and focus are needed so we begin to see sustainable improvement in these critical, patient-focused areas. Improvement and recovery plans are in place, and I know we will begin to make steady progress. This will require ownership, strong leadership, hard work and teamwork, and a recognition we must all play our part.

We held a briefing session last week to go into more detail on our performance against all of our priorities. If you missed this, [you can watch the recording via this link](#). I've committed to these sessions once a quarter, to keep you up to date.

Our 2026 iMatter results showed us engagement is improving - with 400 more of you responding to the survey than last year. You shared with us that you welcome more visible and responsive leadership and the improved communications (you feel more well informed) and welcome our more open approach to leadership. We will absolutely continue this. Equally, the results highlight the areas in which you want us to do better. You want to feel more involved in decision making, to feel confident that when you speak up and raise concerns we will act and your ask that we do more to manage performance in the organisation. I am keen to understand exactly what is meant by performance - do we mean the performance of the organisation or of individuals? This will need to be explored further if we are to meaningfully respond to your feedback. We have some plans in

development that we look forward to sharing with you in the coming months re: how we will strengthen performance management at NHS Grampian.

Staying with iMatter, the deadline for uploading Action Plans is 12 noon on Monday 17 August. As it stands just 15% of teams having uploaded an Action Plan, against a target of 70%. As an Executive Team we did our own Action Plan last week and we have agreed to focus on visible leadership, staff health and wellbeing, and improving team cohesion. While we have set ourselves three actions, my ask of line managers is to prioritise spending time with your teams to discuss one action you will focus on over the next year to come to further improve your team's experience.

I want to add a few words about statutory and mandatory training, and appraisal compliance. The numbers completing statutory and mandatory training continue to show encouraging improvement, with both mandatory training and Fire Safety completion rates increasing during Quarter 1. While performance remains below our target levels, the positive trajectory demonstrates the impact of focused interventions and continued leadership attention, and we encourage teams to maintain this momentum into Quarter 2.

Appraisal compliance has improved more slowly (latest performance is 28.8%) and remains a key area of focus. Given the important role appraisals play in supporting your development, wellbeing, performance management, and organisational accountability, sustained effort throughout Quarter 2 will be essential to accelerate progress and achieve the expected levels of completion.

Last week I spent time with teams at ARI (Security Team, Labs Directorate and hearing about our new SURE Unit) and Dr Gray's, where I spent time in Maternity, the Emergency Department, Ward 4, Theatres, High Dependency Unit, Chaplaincy and renal Dialysis Unit. Thanks to all teams for their time, being honest with me about what works well and areas for improvement/what gets in the way. These sessions are one of the ways I stay close to what matters to you. Please get in touch with me directly via laura.skaife-knight@nhs.scot if you'd like me to come and spend time with you/your team. I look forward to more conversations, recognising their value.

Finally, a warm welcome to Jay O'Brien, our new substantive Director of People and Culture, who joins us today. Happy day one, Jay! Melanie Saunders, who has been Interim Director of People and Culture for much of 2026 to date, continues to support us in this next period with a handover with Jay and to complete some project work through to September time. Thanks to Melanie for her important contributions.

Have a great week everyone and thank you for all you are doing for our patients, their families and our community. You are making a positive difference.

Best wishes

Laura

Laura Skaife-Knight, Chief Executive