

Chief Exec's Update



Monday 5 January 2026

Happy New Year everyone. Here's to 2026 and seeing what we can achieve together, building on the progress we can evidence from last year.

A big thank you to those who worked over the festive period to care for our patients and community. Please know how much this is appreciated recognising the personal sacrifices made to do so.

Thank you also to everyone - including all partners and wider agencies - for going above and beyond (and continuing to do so) to keep our communities safe as we respond to this extremely challenging winter weather which looks set to continue for the week ahead.

A special congratulations to Professor Zosia Miedzybrodzka for being recognised in the New Year's Honours, receiving an OBE for her services to genetics medicine and research and her role as an honorary consultant clinical geneticist and Service Clinical Director of Genetics at NHS Grampian. I had the pleasure of getting to know Zosia well during my time at NHS Orkney, seeing first-hand how the pioneering cancer research work she leads impacted those communities and continues to do so.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the strike action by resident doctors planned for next week. I know preparations are well underway to ensure critical services are protected and to minimise the impact on patients. I also know and respect that there may be differing views regarding the dispute, but I am confident we will continue to treat each other with courtesy and kindness in these weeks to come, recognising this.

Looking further ahead, this year for me is about building on progress to date and ensuring we have strong foundations in place to deliver sustainable and continuous improvement. At the heart of this will be prioritising work on improving our organisational culture, staff experience and engagement, stabilising leadership, and further strengthening our governance - as summarised below.

We have begun planning for the financial year ahead, and look forward to sharing our priorities for 2026/27 with you in the months ahead so we can get off to the best possible start from April onwards, when Quarter 1 begins, and these will include:

- People First; increasing our focus on staff engagement and improving your experience of working here.
- Improving organisational culture; concentrating on leadership, health and wellbeing, and equality.
- Continued focus on improving operational performance (and with this patient safety and experience).
- Financial sustainability; exploring system transformation/redesign opportunities with our partners.

- Strengthened operational governance and more inclusive decision-making.
- Engaging fully in the new sub-national NHS Scotland arrangements and continuing to explore opportunities for collaboration, partnership, and system working.
- Delivering on our Improvement Plan, our response to last year's external diagnostic review.
- Agreeing, with Scottish Government, a clear path to move from Level 4 to Level 3 of the NHS Scotland NHS Support and Intervention Framework. We expect to receive this at the end of January and look forward to sharing this with you, recognising it is central to our 2026/27 priorities.

It's clear it's going to be another busy year, but I am confident we will achieve great things, by working together. Here's to a successful 2026 and the progress we will make together, for the benefit of the people we care for, for our wider communities and each other. I start the year with nothing but hope and optimism.

Take care and best wishes,

Laura

Laura Skaife-Knight
Chief Executive