



Public Involvement Team Annual Report 2025 - 26

Evolving through Involving...



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of Engagement**

Looking Ahead: 'Responding for Today, Preparing for Tomorrow'

As we look towards the year ahead, the health and care landscape across Scotland continues to evolve at pace. NHS Boards face significant challenges, alongside increasing expectations to deliver sustainable, high-quality services that meet the needs of the populations they serve. Within NHS Grampian, our Stage 4 escalation status places a clear focus on improvement, recovery and transformation, while continuing to provide safe, effective and person-centred care.

Against this backdrop, it is increasingly important that we remain connected to the people who use our services. Periods of change can bring uncertainty, but they also create opportunities to listen differently, work differently and strengthen partnerships with patients, families, carers, communities and staff. Meaningful involvement helps us understand what matters most to people and ensures that decisions are informed by real experiences and local priorities.

The year ahead will see continued implementation of the Putting People First programme and the refresh of our Plan for the Future ambitions. These initiatives reinforce a shared commitment to prevention, reducing inequalities, improving outcomes and creating services that are designed around people's needs rather than organisational boundaries. While the specific challenges facing services may change, the importance of involving people in shaping solutions remains constant.

Nationally, the Programme for Government and wider public service reform agenda signal further changes to how health and care services are organised and delivered. As systems continue to evolve, there will be an increasing need to build trust, strengthen relationships and create opportunities for meaningful dialogue with the people and communities we serve.

For the Public Involvement Team, this presents an important opportunity. Our role is not simply to support engagement activity but to help embed a culture where involvement is valued as a core part of decision-making, service improvement and transformation. We will continue to build confidence, capability and connections across NHS Grampian, supporting colleagues to engage well, involve people early and make the most of lived experience and community insight.

Looking ahead, we are optimistic about what can be achieved through collaboration. The challenges facing health and care are significant, but so too is the willingness of our communities, patients, public representatives and colleagues to contribute their knowledge, experience and ideas. By working together, listening well and keeping people at the centre of our thinking, we can help shape services that are more responsive, equitable and sustainable for the future.

While the future will continue to bring both challenge and opportunity, the foundations for meaningful involvement are already built. This report showcases the breadth of activity delivered throughout 2025/26 and the many ways in which people have helped shape conversations, influence decisions and improve services across NHS Grampian.

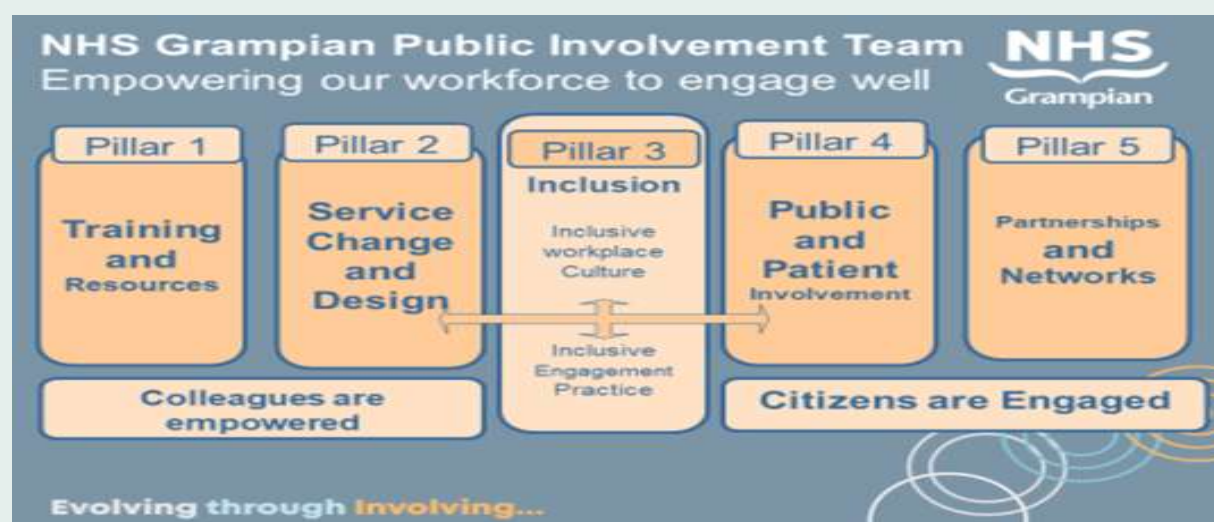
About the Public Involvement Team

Welcome to the NHS Grampian Public Involvement Team Annual Report 2025–26.

This report highlights some of the Public Involvement Team’s current projects, showcasing the breadth and impact of the work over the past year. It highlights our ongoing commitment to strengthening meaningful engagement with patients, families, carers and communities, ensuring that people’s experiences, views and insights help shape the services we provide.

As a small but dedicated team, we are proud of the wide range of projects and initiatives we have supported across the organisation. Working in partnership with staff, patients and the public, we have helped create opportunities for people to influence decisions, contribute to service improvements and support the delivery of person-centred care.

Our core aim is to support and enable high-quality patient and public involvement across NHS Grampian. We do this by providing staff with practical guidance, training, resources and support, helping them to feel confident and equipped to engage meaningfully with the people who use and experience our services.



This approach aligns with *Planning with People* — the national guidance that all NHS Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships in Scotland are expected to follow. The guidance makes it clear that meaningful involvement is everyone's responsibility. The Public Involvement Team plays a key role in supporting staff across the organisation to embed engagement into everyday practice, ensuring that involving people in decisions becomes a natural and valued part of service planning, design and improvement.

While this report does not capture every aspect of our work, it provides a snapshot of some of our key achievements and activities from the past year. Together, these examples demonstrate the value of collaboration, co-production and listening to the voices of those who use our services, helping us to learn, improve and evolve together.

At the heart of everything we do is a commitment to ensuring that patients, families, carers and communities are empowered to have a meaningful voice in shaping the future of health and care services across NHS Grampian.



Resources for Staff

As part of our commitment to empowering staff, we worked with a range of partners to create a set of bespoke engagement tools, training, and resources which are available on our website. We worked with our colleagues in Public Health, local organisations, and community groups through Community Planning Aberdeen and the Grampian Engagement Network (GEN) to ensure that they were meaningfully designed to help teams feel confident and capable when involving the patients and members of the public.



Patient and Community Engagement Training

We have the training you need to learn about why you should be engaging and how to get started. Our training is developed and delivered locally for all staff and partners.

[Read Here](#)



Bespoke digital engagement tools

These engagement tools will help you plan and deliver your engagement.

[Read Here](#)



Groups and networks to support your engagement

More information about the different groups and networks that can support your engagement.

[Read Here](#)

NHS Grampian Public Involvement Network

Our Public Involvement Network brings together a diverse group of Public Representatives who contribute their lived experience and insight to help shape services across NHS Grampian. Our Public Reps play a key role at all levels of the organisation, sitting on Boards and Committees, taking part in focus groups, responding to consultations and surveys, and providing feedback on service developments. They act as a vital sounding board and source of public intelligence, helping us to understand what matters most to patients, families and communities. As equal partners, they challenge, support and inform our work, helping to ensure that decisions are grounded in real experiences and that services are designed and improved in ways that genuinely meet people's needs.

During 2025/26, we completed a review of our Public Involvement Network (PIN) and began the implementation of our new two-tiered structure:

- (i) PIN mailing list for sharing events, opportunities to get involved and updates
- (ii) Public Involvement Representatives – group of individuals who are actively engaged and have completed necessary induction requirements to take on PI Representative roles on groups, committees and at one-off events

Engagement 101

Building Confidence for Better Conversations

Engagement 101 is an introductory training session developed by the Public Involvement Team to help all NHS Grampian colleagues feel more confident starting and leading meaningful engagement. Recognising that it can sometimes feel unclear where to begin, the session breaks down what good engagement looks like in practice and why it matters, helping to empower staff in all roles to involve patients, families and communities in shaping services.

Following a successful pilot with positive feedback from a wide range of staff, Engagement 101 is now being rolled out more widely and will soon be available on Turas, with bookable sessions running throughout the year. Open to everyone, the training offers a practical, supportive space to learn, share and build skills—helping make engagement part of everyday practice and ensuring we continue to put people at the heart of what we do.

The new PIN mailing list has been created, now including community groups and third sector organisations, as well as individuals who have an interest in healthcare, and now has over 200 contacts on the distribution list. This is allowing us to reach a wider audience across Grampian and the list will continue to grow as we increase awareness and more groups and individuals are added. Work is continuing to develop the recruitment and induction process for Public Involvement Representatives. Once in place, the opportunity will be promoted to grow the membership of the group.



Promoting Involvement on Hospital Radio

Confidence to Engage in Communities

The Foundations of Community Engagement workshops continue to support engagement practitioners to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to involve people and communities in decisions that affect them.

The workshops provide a practical introduction to community engagement for staff who are planning projects, service improvements, or engagement activities. The sessions explore how meaningful involvement can lead to better decision-making, stronger relationships with communities, and services that better reflect people's needs and experiences. Participants are introduced to key principles of effective community engagement, including identifying the purpose of engagement, understanding barriers that may prevent people from

taking part, and using practical planning tools to design inclusive and accessible engagement activities.

As well as the training course, an online toolkit to support community organising and engagement has been launched by Community Planning Aberdeen. [The Community Empowerment Toolkit](#) provides tips and information for anyone looking to take action and make changes in their community. It is also for anyone looking to undertake community engagement as part of their role.

As demand for engagement support continues to grow across the organisation, the programme group are in the early stages of exploring what comes next. This includes considering how future learning opportunities, resources and support could help staff further develop their confidence and capability in community engagement and involvement. In the meantime, please email ross.lavin@nhs.scot or gram.puttingpeoplefirst@nhs.scot with any questions.

Connecting People, Improving Practice: A Year with the Grampian Engagement Network



The story of the Grampian Engagement Network (GEN) isn't really about structures or frameworks, it's about people, and what happens when they choose connection over isolation.

The GEN was created during the Covid-19 pandemic to bring together colleagues involved in engagement across Grampian, and it's grown into something really special. What started as a space to share learning in uncertain times is now a supportive, collaborative network where people connect, exchange ideas, and build confidence in their engagement practice.



Over the past year, GEN has hosted a range of engaging online sessions, from exploring community learning approaches to showcasing creative methods like podcasting, film, and the arts to engage with communities. It has helped strengthen connections across NHS, local authority and third sector partners, while developing a shared approach through the



In-person GEN at Shmu Studios

hallmarks for great engagement. Above all, GEN is a welcoming space where colleagues can learn from each other, feel inspired, and leave with practical ideas to apply in their work. We'd love to see even more people join us as we continue to grow. Contact us at gram.gen@nhs.scot

The Health Equity + Learning Project (HELP)

The HELP Project sought to identify barriers that Aberdeenshire and Grampian families face in attending healthcare appointments for their children, particularly those who have to attend regularly. As one of the routes to address child poverty, the project explored the lived experience of families living rurally and how that geography can impact access to healthcare.

The 18 month Scottish Government funded project focussed on the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital (RACH) with essential input from

families, those that support them and an expert panel of people with lived experience who articulated barriers. The group were essential in the design of addressing 3 key barriers out of the many raised:

- Access to transport including returning home evening/night/early morning when public transport is unavailable
- Access to food and refreshments when visiting the hospital
- Access to laundry on site at RACH (Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital)

The above tests of change were put in place to ensure support was available for families around these challenges. These projects continue to be supported and addressed through the welfare team at Aberdeenshire Council, the Archie Foundation and RACH staff.



Functional Conditions Managed Service Network Project

The Public Involvement Team has

supported the NHS Grampian Functional Conditions Managed Service Network, a two-year project funded by NHS Grampian Charity.

Functional conditions are health conditions characterised by persistent physical symptoms and impairment that cannot be wholly explained by a known disease or physical cause. The project focuses on improving support and care for people living with functional neurological disorder (FND), irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), fibromyalgia and unexplained chronic pelvic pain.

The project aims to develop a more coordinated and person-centred approach across services. Public Involvement support has focused on embedding co-production principles and creating opportunities for people with lived experience, families and carers to influence the design

and development of the project from the outset, helping to ensure that future services are shaped by the people who use them.

Our aim is to help people feel:

Heard – their experiences are listened to

Held – supported throughout their journey

Empowered – able to better understand and manage their symptoms



Maternity Engagement

The Grampian Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP)

Involving You - Birth in Grampian has been supported by the Public Involvement team since it was formed in 2018. 2025/26 has been no different

as we continue to work collaboratively with the MVP chairs and members to progress key priorities for maternity services in Grampian; antenatal education, induction of labour, postnatal care and triage. We support this work through community engagement, reviewing feedback, facilitating focus groups, partnership working at meetings and overall administration of the partnership. We have also taken a leading role in helping the group increase its diversity of recruitment to the group by contacting and attending a variety of local groups to encourage involvement and share information on how become a member.



Out with the work of the MVP, there has been dedicated engagement support across Moray to help inform the work of the Maternity Collaborative Programme, which is working towards a new consultant led maternity service at Dr Gray's Hospital in Elgin. In 2025/26 there have

been 280+ face-to face interactions with service users and members of the public in Moray, delivered through a mix of outreach and drop-in sessions.

In addition, there has been a focus on engaging with ethnic minority groups, with stalls at EID on the Terrace in June and Aberdeen MELA - One World Day in September, to promote the MVP, signpost to the Birth in Grampian website, social media pages and offer any maternity related support and advice. We have also been working closely with Public Health colleagues on the Maternity Health Needs Assessment to identify and understand the needs of pregnant women experiencing, or at risk of, vulnerability in NHS Grampian, with a specific focus on women from ethnic minority backgrounds.



Shaping Service Improvement through Lived Experience Voices

As part of the Putting People

First programme, funded by NHS Grampian Charities, additional dedicated resource has been allocated to ensure lived experience is embedded into service improvement and change. This work supports NHS Grampian's ambition to create more person-centred, preventative and equitable approaches to care by listening to and acting on what matters most to the people who use services.



Lived experience approaches include building relationships with existing networks and groups, supporting the development of panels and reference groups with people who have firsthand experience of health conditions and services. The additional capacity is also contributing to the continued development of Community Appointment Days by ensuring people with lived experience are shaping the events during the planning process.

The aim is not only to hear people's views, but to create meaningful opportunities for collaboration, improvement and shared learning that leads to better outcomes for individuals, communities and services alike. As there is no "one size fits all" approach to supporting these projects, questions and new opportunities are encouraged and welcomed. Please email ross.lavin@nhs.scot or gram.involve@nhs.scot to find out more.



'The BIG Conversation' - Chronic Pain Community Appointment Day (CAD)

New Pharmacy Applications



The Public Involvement Team

supports statutory public consultations relating to proposed additions to the NHS Grampian Pharmaceutical List. This

includes consultation planning, promotion, response analysis, and preparation of Consultation Analysis Reports. During 2025/26, two consultations were completed, one intended applicant did not proceed to consultation stage, and one application was subsequently withdrawn. Pharmacy consultations consume a considerable amount of the small Public Involvement Team capacity, and with their currently being 17 notes of interest for new Pharmacies in Grampian, this is an area that will need to be reviewed.

Public Involvement Arrangements Audit

During 2026, PwC completed an internal audit of NHS Grampian's public involvement arrangements, providing an overall Satisfactory assurance opinion. The audit recognised the strong foundations in place, including having a dedicated Public Involvement Team, established processes and the use of tools such as VOiCE. It also identified opportunities to strengthen consistency, governance and evidence of public involvement across service change programmes. In response, NHS Grampian committed to embedding VOiCE within project governance, clarifying roles and responsibilities for engagement, and delivering supporting training and assurance measures by March 2027.



Capital Projects

A **capital project** refers to investment in physical infrastructure or long-term assets within the NHS, such as building new facilities, refurbishing existing spaces, or purchasing major equipment. These projects are typically large-scale, carefully planned, and funded through dedicated capital budgets rather than day-to-day operational funding. Capital projects play a key role in improving the environments in which care is delivered, supporting modern ways of working, and ensuring services are safe, efficient, and fit for the future. Involving patients, staff and communities in the design and development of these projects is essential to ensure that new and improved spaces truly meet the needs of the people who use and deliver services.

Integrated Mortuary

The construction phase of the Integrated Mortuary project was completed in autumn 2025, which was followed by a period of commissioning and the building opened in December. Throughout the final months of construction and commissioning, the Project Team were supported to ensure communication and engagement continued. This included:

- regular project newsletters and updated frequently asked questions
- engagement with local bereavement charities, who influenced the finishing's and features in the public areas of the building
- engagement with staff, including input on finishing's and artwork
- liaising with Medical Illustration to arrange photography and videography of the completed facilities
- assisting with arranging and supporting visits to the building for different stakeholders prior to opening



The Baird Family Hospital and ANCHOR Centre

are two new facilities being built on the Foresterhill Health Campus in Aberdeen. When open The Baird Family Hospital will accommodate all services currently delivered from the Aberdeen Maternity Hospital, along with breast services, gynaecology services, theatres, radiology services and research and teaching facilities.

The ANCHOR Centre will provide day and outpatient services for oncology and haematology patients. There will be an onsite pharmacy, research and teaching facilities as well as a physical link to the current radiotherapy building.

Throughout the life of this project there has been dedicated communication and engagement resource which has ensured a

comprehensive programme of engagement has continued over the years.

The main activities over the last year have included:

- Continued NHS Grampian Board updates.
- Continued engagement with service colleagues and involvement in all commissioning planning activities.
- Continued engagement with our charity partners and third sector interest groups.
- Detailed communication and engagement plan developed for the commissioning period of The ANCHOR Centre.
- Working with Marketing and Visual Communications to produce a campaign approach to all visual communications for the lead up to The ANCHOR Centre opening.
- Consultation regarding patient and visitor and staff and volunteer information.
- Development of ANCHOR Intranet pages.
- Looking into using new technology for Baird orientation.
- Community benefits programme completed.
- Art consultation for both buildings.
- End of year presentation delivered to Project Board. Full report available on request.

Further project information can be found at www.bairdanchor.org

SURE Unit at ARI

The new SURE (Swift Urological Response Evaluation) Unit, which will be located in the Phase 1 building (Yellow Zone) at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, will be a one-stop diagnostic centre for people with symptoms of urological cancers, enabling more people with suspected urological cancer to be seen quicker, and to have all of their scans and diagnostic

tests carried out during a single visit to hospital.

UCAN are teaming up with Friends of ANCHOR to raise £3.3 million to fund the new unit, with an additional contribution from NHS Grampian Charity of £464,000 towards the total, which will enable purchasing of advanced medical equipment and furniture for the new unit.

Whilst doing the construction work, NHS Grampian will also be taking the opportunity to improve the existing infrastructure by completing associated backlog maintenance.

Enabling works for the project began in early 2026. Communication and engagement support will continue throughout the construction and commissioning phases of the project to ensure all stakeholders are kept informed and involved when there are opportunities to influence.

Reflections

As we reflect on the past year, we are grateful to the patients, carers, families, communities, Public Representatives and colleagues who have generously shared their time, experiences and expertise. Their contributions continue to shape and improve services across NHS Grampian and demonstrate the value of working together as equal partners in health and care.

While this report provides only a snapshot of our public involvement activity, it highlights the power of listening, collaboration and meaningful involvement in achieving better outcomes. It reflects our commitment to Putting People First by moving beyond doing things to or for people and instead working with people, ensuring that lived experience sits alongside professional expertise and evidence to inform decisions.

As we move into the next phase of our work, we will continue to strengthen partnerships with patients, communities and colleagues, involving people earlier and more meaningfully in the design and improvement of services. We will create a more person-centred, preventative and sustainable health and care system, where listening, learning and shared decision-making are part of everyday practice. By keeping the voices of the people we serve at the heart of decision-making, we can build services that better meet the needs of current and future generations across Grampian.

With thanks to the Public Involvement Team for all of their great work this year and for collaboratively producing this annual report.