

Meeting:	NHS Grampian Board
Meeting date:	12 December 2024
Item Number:	14.1
Title:	Planning for Winter 2024/25
Responsible Executive:	Geraldine Fraser
Report Author(s):	Lucy McLeod and Michael Coulthard

1 Purpose

This is presented to the Board for:

- Endorsement

The Board is asked to:

Endorse the NHS Grampian System Wide Winter Preparedness 2024/2025 Plan

This report relates to:

- NHS Grampian Strategy: Plan for the Future – People (Citizens & Colleagues), Pathways (Whole System Working, Access)
- Delivery Plan – Population Based Approach to Health, Improving Access and Protecting Planned Care – Secondary Care, Unscheduled Care – Secondary Care
- Government policy/directive – 2024/25 Winter Preparedness Plan

This aligns to the following NHS Scotland quality ambitions:

- Safe
- Effective
- Person Centred

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

It is imperative that the system is prepared for the seasonal challenges it is expected to face over the incoming winter months. A different approach to winter planning was introduced last winter, seeking to build upon the winter planning undertaken at a variety of levels within the system to create linkages between its constituent parts. This year has continued that

approach as well as incorporating the learning from last year's winter planning process alongside new and emerging drivers. The Winter Preparedness 24/25 outlines those steps and plans that we can undertake as part of our winter planning process. Given the additional demands and pressures which occur over the winter season, a supplementary report to this one will detail the response provisions and suggested capacity increase.

2.2 Background

Winter planning is a key function and well-established annual process for NHS Grampian and its partners across the Local Resilience Partnership. Given the continued challenges and pressures being experienced across the Health and Social Care system in Grampian and beyond, it is particularly important that the system is prepared for the additional seasonal demand which can be expected over the impending Winter 2024/25 period.

2.3 Assessment

Having considered winter planning in its entirety, there are two broad aspects to what is commonly envisaged when the topic is raised; firstly, preparing for the impact of severe weather that can be experienced over winter months and secondly, preparing to respond to the increased demand for healthcare over the same time period. While some elements of preparedness cut across both themes, there are also certain aspects which only relate to one. Recent experience has shown that neither of these scenarios are unique to the winter period and therefore a shift towards year-round planning is being taken.

This Scottish Government 2024/25 Winter Preparedness Plan and supporting completion of the associated readiness checklist process has been concluded. The NHS Grampian plan follows the four national priorities for winter planning which are:

- Priority 1 – Prioritise care for all people in our communities, enabling people to live well with the support they choose and utilise effective prevention to keep people well, avoiding them needing hospital care.
- Priority 2 – Ensure people receive the right care, in the right place at the right time, this includes prioritising care at home, or as close to home as possible, where clinically appropriate.
- Priority 3 – Maximise capacity and capability to meet demand and maintain integrated health, and social care and social work services, protecting planned and established care, to reduce long waits and unmet need.
- Priority 4 – Focus on supporting the wellbeing of our health and social care workforce, their capacity and improving retention, as well as valuing and supporting Scotland's unpaid carers.

The Plan recognises the pre-existing responsibilities of each partner organisation, and is not intended to replace local Business Continuity Planning or Business Impact Analysis. All links

to localised improvement work, resilience planning and civil contingency planning are respectfully acknowledged.

The Board is an active member of the Grampian Local Resilience Partnership. This forum provides an opportunity to share winter planning arrangements and partner debriefs, for example the Shetland Winter Debrief, Storms Malik and Corrie so that partners can learn collaboratively in their preparation for winter.

Collaboration with HSCPs and wider partners is an important aspect of service delivery and development year-round, but this is particularly pertinent over the winter period where colleagues work collaboratively to meet and balance demands being felt in specific parts of the system. HSCP teams have developed protocols/business continuity plans for their teams describing Priorities of Care and areas that can be stepped down. These are used with support from and discussion with managers and professional leads and linked to the G-OPES framework which defines levels of system pressure and links them to clearly defined actions. This framework is a tool for a shared risk approach, balancing resource and capacity across the system in time of peak pressure.

Alongside business continuity management, the Plan references related work to increase available bed capacity in periods of peak demand. This includes the Bed Contingency Capacity Plan; the SAS/AMIA Test of Change; and Discharge without Delay work.

Public Communication and Engagement

Communicating with the public is especially important over the winter period where increased demand for services can be influenced by environmental factors. Our Corporate Communications Team have developed several resources to support this, and work with colleagues locally and nationally to ensure consistent messaging. 'Know Who To Turn To' is a well-established campaign which highlights the range of options available, many of which are within the community rather than a hospital setting. Steps are being taken to consolidate some of this guidance into key messages about actions to be taken when ill or injured with the aim of highlighting alternatives to immediate hospital attendance.

Supporting citizens to keep safe and well over winter is an important aspect of managing demand on health and social care services over winter. NHS Grampian utilises and supports the established national messaging in this area, with regular posts on social media using nationally developed assets. Additional messaging on being prepared for winter weather and the services available from pharmacies further supports this important aspect of preparation.

2.3.1 Quality / Patient Care

This work should improve the quality of care as it seeks to improve the winter health and well-being of Grampian citizens and where possible alleviate some of the additional demand for unscheduled care which presents during the winter period.

2.3.2 Workforce

This approach is intended to have a positive impact for those working across the system. It aims to help increase the understanding of the linkages and opportunities for joint working with partner agencies and our shared approach between acute services and community services to managing increased demand during winter months. Ultimately, those working within the system are also users of the system and should benefit as citizens as well as staff. The Plan will be made available to staff groups on the intranet so they can be aware of the approach and the plans in place.

2.3.3 Financial

Enacting the Bed Contingency Capacity Plan will incur additional costs which are set out in the supplementary paper. Currently no additional funding is being received by Health and Social Care Partnerships this winter therefore solutions implemented in previous years such as Interim Care beds may be more restricted. The AMIA/SAS Test of Change is being funded from the Unscheduled Care Improvement Funds.

2.3.4 Risk Assessment/Management

There is a risk that additional pressure will be placed on a system which is already experiencing considerable demand. Unscheduled care activity over the summer of this year has not reduced as is normally the case. This combined with what is achievable within the current financial context poses a risk to the system experiencing further pressure in the winter months. Ensuring that people know where to access services and support locally will be key, and this aligns to the national winter planning approach of keeping people safe at home over the winter.

2.3.5 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

An equality impact assessment has not been completed for this programme of work specifically, however equality, diversity and health inequalities are routinely considered as part of planning processes within each partner organisation.

2.3.6 Other impacts

No other impacts have been identified.

2.3.7 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

As mentioned in Section 2.3 above, the process for responding to the winter preparedness checklist from Scottish Government has included communication, involvement and

engagement with a wide range of partners including the three Health and Social Care Partnerships.

2.4 Route to the Meeting

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report.

- Unscheduled Care Improvement Programme Board; 20 August 2024, 17 September 2024, 12 November 2024
- Chief Executive Team; 17 September 2024

2.5 Recommendation

The Board is asked to:

Endorse the NHS Grampian System Wide Winter Preparedness 2024/2025 Plan

2 Appendix/List of Appendices

- NHS Grampian System Wide Winter Preparedness 2024/2025 Plan

Abbreviations

MUSC	Medicine and Unscheduled Care
USC PB	Unscheduled Care Programme Board
CfSD	Centre for Sustainable Delivery
SAS	Scottish Ambulance Service
G-OPES	Grampian Operational Pressure Escalation System
BCM	Business Continuity Management
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
BIA	Business Impact Assessment
GLRP	Grampian Local Resilience Partnership
BBR	Bed Base Review
DWD	Discharge Without Delay
HIS	Health Improvement Scotland