



## **Purpose of this report**

This report updates Board members on priority issues since the last Board meeting which are not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **Welcome**

I am delighted to be bringing my first report to you as NHS Grampian's new Chief Executive and would like to thank my predecessor Adam Coldwells for working closely with me over recent weeks to complete a thorough handover and ensure a smooth transition between us.

I recognise that I'm joining the organisation during a time of significant challenge. However, I see this as a great opportunity for us to shape our future together and I look forward to leading the organisation through its next chapter, building on work already underway and delivering improvements in close collaboration with our staff and system partners.

NHS Grampian's commitment to partnership working and its constructive relationship with staff-side will be invaluable through this process, as will our established links with the communities we serve. Through these and other forums I am determined that we live up to the organisation's values of caring, listening and improving, which I will do my best to role model. I am confident that we can meet and overcome the challenges we face as long as we work together and as a whole system.

## **Priorities**

Key to achieving this will be a relentless focus on our highest priorities and the improvements we are aiming to achieve. I would therefore like to provide reassurance that NHS Grampian is fully engaged in delivering against its priorities and I am determined that this focus continues.

Our priorities remain our Value and Sustainability, Unscheduled (urgent and emergency) Care and Planned Care Programmes, which will deliver both financial sustainability and performance improvement in line with our own objectives and those set out in the NHS Scotland Operational Improvement Plan.

Enhanced governance arrangements for these priorities, which will ensure sufficient resource and provide the necessary oversight to support delivery, are being finalised and this is something I will return to in future updates. I look forward to sharing evidence of our progress across all of these domains with you on a regular basis.

## **Assurance Board**

We continue to attend and fulsomely engage with the Scottish Government-chaired Assurance Board linked to our Level 4 escalation on a bi-weekly basis, which after five meetings is already proving to be very constructive means of sharing our current position, progress and plans for improvement with the Scottish Government.

Updates to the Assurance Board have included our Unscheduled Care and Planned Care Improvement Plans, progress against our financial and savings plans for the year and work we are doing to further strengthen governance arrangements in each of our priority programmes.

Following our escalation to Level Four of the NHS Scotland Support and Intervention framework earlier this year, the Scottish Government commissioned a diagnostic review to provide additional support to the organisation, which we welcomed.

A report containing the review's findings will soon be published and we have already begun implementing the recommendations to inform further improvements at NHS Grampian (as described above). We will also share our Board's response to the report which includes the development of a single Improvement Plan, delivery of which will be overseen by the Assurance Board as well as through NHS Grampian's own internal governance mechanisms.

Regular updates will be shared in a variety of ways, including future public meetings of the NHS Grampian Board and via the Scottish Government's website.

## **Planned care – further reducing our longest patient waits**

Linked to our escalation status, the Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Executive for NHS Scotland wrote to all Health Board Chief Executives in August 2025 to request they explore options for supporting NHS Grampian to address our longest waits for planned care.

This recognised our that performance is far from where we wish it to be and reflects the First Minister's commitment to ensuring that no one is waiting longer than 52-weeks for their new outpatient appointment or inpatient/day-case procedure by March 2026.

NHS Grampian welcomed this cross-Board support and endorsement of collaborative working, which has led to joint efforts with other Boards following numerous offers of support. Among the areas of ongoing collaboration are outpatient appointments and inpatient waits, which we anticipate will further improve performance over previous trajectories.

Also in August 2025, the Scottish Government requested a rapid review of Planned Care at NHS Grampian in order that every opportunity for improving performance was thoroughly explored. This work brought additional external resource to assist us across areas including productivity and efficiency, trajectory modelling, financial planning, systems of assurance and performance management.

Once the conclusions of this exercise have been received by NHS Grampian, they will further inform our Planned Care programme, which is making good progress and remains one of the top priorities for Health Boards nationally, as well as here.

### **New Director of Public Health**

Since our last Board meeting, Professor Shantini Paranjothy has been appointed as NHS Grampian's Director of Public Health. Having begun her career as a junior doctor, Shantini then followed a public health path, which saw her work for Public Health Wales and become a Professor of Preventative Medicine at Cardiff University. She joined NHS Grampian in 2020, where her invaluable contribution as lead public health consultant for the Test and Protect programme during the pandemic cannot be overstated and contributed to her appointment as NHS Grampian's Deputy Director of Public Health in 2023.

With a wealth of experience and close links with academia, as a Professor of Public Health at the University of Aberdeen, I am certain that Shantini's expertise will continue to be a great asset as we work together to address health inequalities and work towards improving health outcomes for everyone in the region.

### **Anti-racism commitment**

Being the first Health Board in Scotland to collaboratively develop and publish an Anti-Racism Plan with the University of Aberdeen and NHS Grampian's Staff Equalities Network, has previously been acknowledged at a national level. I was therefore pleased and proud to participate in a workshop during September 2025 that will inform the future and next phase of this vital work.

The workshop, called 'Leading the Change,' once again focussed attention on what we can do individually and collectively to foster an inclusive environment for all patients and staff. Members of our Anti-racism Oversight Group led the session and the enthusiasm in the room from colleagues across the system was evident.

Scottish Government representatives were present to hear about our emerging future plans and our ongoing commitment to training and awareness raising activities. They also shared some good practice from other areas on being inclusive by design, which will undoubtedly help us to empower leaders and managers within our system as we move forward.

### **Flu vaccination programme**

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of colleagues delivering our winter vaccination programme. The programme is now well under way, with children, pregnant women and health and social care workers being offered the flu vaccination from 8 September 2025.

As of 29 September 2025, vaccinators have administered 37,677 flu vaccines to eligible individuals and I am pleased to report that uptake among our health and social care workers is currently above Scotland's average.

This year's programme is shaped by guidance from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which has introduced some changes to eligibility criteria for the Covid-19 vaccine.

In Grampian we have in the region of 310,000 children and adults who are eligible for a winter vaccination this year. I would therefore encourage everyone who receives an invitation to take up the offer of vaccination. Not only does it help to protect them and others from avoidable illness but it supports the resilience of our health and care system during the winter months and is therefore hugely appreciated by our hardworking staff.

Laura Skaife-Knight, Chief Executive

3 October 2025