

Meeting:	NHS Grampian Board
Meeting date:	9 October 2025
Item Number:	10
Title:	Unscheduled Care Improvement Plan
Responsible Executive:	Geraldine Fraser, Chief Officer - Acute Services
Report Author:	Geraldine Fraser, Chief Officer - Acute Services

1 Purpose and recommendations

This is presented to the Board for:

- Endorsement

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

1. endorse the Unscheduled Care Improvement Plan: Grampian Health and Care System
2. agree to receive regular updates on progress with reporting through:
 - a) the new performance framework and 'How Are We Doing' (HAWD) reports at future board meetings; and
 - b) monthly briefing reports in months where there is no formal board meeting with HAWD performance reporting
3. Note the connection with the Winter Preparedness Plan 25/26 and shifting the balance of care

This report relates to:

- NHS Grampian Strategy: Plan for the Future – Pathways
- Strategic risk – unscheduled care and derogations of care
- Operational Improvement Plan

This aligns to the following NHS Scotland quality ambition(s):

- Safe
- Effective
- Person Centred

This subject matter of this report is relevant to the mitigation of the following strategic risks (further information provided in the Risk section below)

- Significant delays in the delivery of Unscheduled Care
- Deviation from recognised service standards of practice and delivery

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

NHS Grampian has been asked by the Scottish Government-chaired Assurance Board to submit a plan to improve Unscheduled Care (USC) performance, with particular focus on improving ambulance turnaround times at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (ARI) and Dr Gray's Hospital (DGH) through a whole system approach to reduce hospital occupancy, and to maximise flow and downstream community capacity. This approach is in line with the Scottish Government's Operational Improvement Plan and focuses on shifting the balance of care from acute services to community.

2.2 Background

This plan combines the efforts of the Health and Social Care Partnerships for Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray and the Acute Sector. They have worked together over several months to identify the approach which will give the most impact and benefit to the Grampian unscheduled care system to improve safety and patient experience, and to ensure that patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

NHS Grampian has worked closely with the Centre for Sustainable Delivery (CfSD) in identifying opportunities which will give the greatest impact, and these are reflected in this whole system plan. NHS Grampian and the three Health and Social Care Partnerships are also part of the national Discharge without Delay Collaborative (DwD) and have committed to delivering the outputs of the programme, aiming to accelerating these from delivery by March 2026 in order to be in place by winter 25/26.

The Scottish Ambulance Service has been engaged in developing our priorities and approach and will be partners in delivery, particularly in relation to existing workstreams such as the Flow Navigation Centre. We have also liaised with other health boards in relation to shared learning and best practice for unscheduled care improvement initiatives.

2.3 Assessment

Phase 1 of the USC Plan (Year 1 - 25/26) details the actions which are considered to be of the greatest impact to the system and are based on a combination of local intelligence and national expert advice. A whole system partnership approach will be taken to delivery of the plan, with KPIs and trajectories to monitor improvements in performance aligned to deliverables in the USC Plan.

The USC Plan will deliver additional capacity in the community over the winter period for 25/26 and is therefore connected to the winter planning approach as detailed in the separate item on the Board's agenda today. It is based on investment from Scottish

Government to improve outcomes and performance in whole system unscheduled care pathways.

2.3.1 Quality / Patient Care

2.3.2 Workforce

Delivery of the USC Plan will involve recruitment, utilising additional funding for expansion/set up of new teams such as 'Discharge to Assess'. These have been modelled by operational teams and are detailed in the USC Plan. Delivery will have a positive impact on the workforce by increasing capacity and bringing this into balance with current demand for emergency and urgent care services.

2.3.3 Financial

Delivery of the plan will require funding, and this is being supported by Scottish Government additional unscheduled care recurring funding for Grampian health and care system of up to £8M in 25/26 and 26/27.

2.3.4 Risk Assessment / Management

Delivery of the USC Plan will have a positive impact on the very high risks of unscheduled care demand and of derogations of care. It will also have a positive impact on planned care activity as a result of reduced demand on surgical beds in the acute hospitals.

2.3.5 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

An impact assessment will be completed and reported in summary to the Board at a future meeting. It is anticipated that this will describe positive impacts on persons with protected characteristics as a result in improved access to services.

2.3.7 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

There has been wide collaboration with acute and health and social care partnerships' clinical and leadership teams in shaping the contents of the plan.

2.3.8 Route to the Meeting

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

- Scottish Government Assurance Board – 18/8/25, 2/9/25 and 23/9/25
- Assurance Board USC Sub-Group – 28/8/25, 3/9/25, 11/9/25 and 17/9/25
- NHS Grampian Board – seminar 11/9/25
- Chief Executive Team – 8/7/25, 29/7/25, 9/9/25

This report is also scheduled to go to the IJBs as below:

- Aberdeenshire IJB – 10/12/25
- Moray IJB – 27/11/25
- City IJB – 30/9/25

2.4 Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

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3 Appendix

The following appendix is included with this report:

- Appendix 1 – Unscheduled Care Improvement Plan: Grampian Health and Care System