

Meeting:	NHS Grampian Board
Meeting date:	8 October 2026
Item Number:	9.16
Title:	Anchor Organisation Annual Highlight Report
Responsible Executive:	Shantini Paranjothy, Director of Public Health
Report Author:	Elaine McConnachie, Public Health Manager, Susan Thom Advanced Public Health Practitioner

1 Purpose and recommendations

This is presented to the Board for:

- Endorsement

Recommendation(s)

The Board is asked to:

- Note the positive overall progress in the delivery of our Anchors programme, with implementation now underway across all pillars, and acknowledge the ongoing challenges in fully embedding this work as a result of capacity constraints across the system.
- Endorse the continued embedding of Anchor principles within organisational decision-making processes.

This report relates to:

- NHS Grampian Strategy: Plan for the Future
- Government policy/directive

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

- Person Centred

This subject matter of this report is relevant to the mitigation of the following strategic risks:

- Deteriorating Workforce Engagement
- Worsening health in Grampian particularly in those who experience multiple disadvantages

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

This report provides the Board with an overview of Anchor activity during 2025/26, highlighting progress against strategic priorities, key achievements, challenges, and opportunities for further development.

The report is presented to provide assurance on delivery of NHS Grampian's five-year Anchors Strategic Plan (2024-2029), which aims to embed Anchor principles across core organisational functions to support Community Wealth Building (CWB), maximise local economic and social value, improve population health outcomes, and reduce inequalities, including child poverty. Delivery during 2025/26 has been supported through an implementation plan aligned to the strategic plan, and a refreshed implementation plan has been developed for 2026/27.

2.2 Background

By addressing the wider determinants of health, Anchor organisations can contribute to improving health and reducing inequalities through their role as employers, purchasers, and owners of land and assets. The Anchor approach is structured around key pillars:

- **Procurement** – increasing local spend to support local jobs and strengthen the local economy
- **Land and Assets** – utilising NHS estate to support communities and environmental sustainability to reduce waste and promote responsible consumption
- **Work and Jobs** – widening access to employment opportunities

As part of NHS Scotland's Delivery Plan Guidance, issued in February 2023, all NHS Boards were asked by the Scottish Government to develop Anchor Strategic Plans to set out how they plan to progress Anchor activity in the three key strands. The work also aligns with Scotland's Population Health Framework [Scotland's Population Health Framework - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/population-health-framework/pages/1/introduction.aspx)

The CWB Bill was passed in parliament in February 2026, establishing a legal framework to ensure wealth is generated, circulated, and retained in local communities across Scotland. This will strengthen the requirement for NHS Boards to contribute to CWB through their work as an Anchor organisation and it will be necessary to work closely with partners to contribute to the continued development of CWB plans when guidance is published: Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026 [Community Wealth Building \(Scotland\) Act 2026](#)

2.3 Assessment

NHS Grampian developed an Anchors strategic plan in 2024, delivery of our work has transitioned from strategic planning and baseline development (Year 1) to implementation and system integration (Year 2).

- **Year 1 focus:** Strategic direction, partnerships, baseline assessment

- **Year 2 focus:** Embedding approaches, delivering practical change, strengthening regional collaboration

Overall, delivery progress across the 2025/26 plan shows:

- **Green:** 73%% (on track)
- **Amber:** 27% (slight delay)
- **Red:** 0% (significant delay)

A document highlighting key achievements from 2025/26 is available in Appendix 1.

Procurement

The overarching aim within the Procurement pillar was to increase local spend.

Key developments:

- Regional engagement through the North East Procurement Anchor Group has taken place however progress has been impacted by system priorities and limitations on data sharing. This remains an active area of focus going forward to enable us to identify an area to take a collaborative approach to increasing local spend.
- Analysis of local, regional, and national spend and identification of opportunities to increase local sourcing undertaken.
- Continued engagement with local suppliers, particularly with NHS Grampian attendance at 'Meet the Buyer' and through engagement with Business Gateway.
- A small increase of 0.5% in local spend during 24/25, considering the reduction in overall non pay spend this represents a positive improvement.

The Procurement pillar is led by the Head of Procurement demonstrating strong buy in and leadership. Progress has been constrained by NHS Grampian's position at Stage 4 of the Support and Intervention Framework. During this period, it was necessary for the procurement team to prioritise identifying efficiency savings and reducing non-essential expenditure. Initial scoping was undertaken to see whether it was possible to introduce a requirement for the procurement team to include a local supplier within quick quote exercises. However, implementation has been constrained by the low volume of quick quote activity being routed through the procurement team as high value procurement exercises were prioritised limiting the overall impact of this approach. As a result, the objective has not been fully achieved within the reporting period.

A revised approach will be considered and incorporated into 2026/27 objectives to increase local spend. An analysis of procurement activity was completed to better understand local, regional, and national spend and any opportunities to increase local spend. Further analysis of food and beverage suppliers showed that 26% of spend in this category remained within Grampian, representing an investment of just over £435k. This supports local businesses, including Small to Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) and third sector organisations.

Workforce (Employability)

The employability pillar focused on improving access to fair and meaningful work for disadvantaged people in our communities.

Key developments:

- Achievement of Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) target (25 individuals supported into employment) ahead of schedule and enabling a further 18 young people to access employment-related opportunities through targeted partnership programmes.
- Additional cohort of 18 young people were supported through partnership with Project Flourish: NHS Grampian Domestic Services actively collaborated with Project Flourish to create supported employment opportunities for young people facing or at risk of homelessness.
- Strengthening links with Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) creating a consistent Grampian-wide approach to employability.
- Work with Domestics Team to understand how we can become a better employer.
- NHS Grampian was successful in the award of Scottish Government Parental Employability Programme funding, supporting 20 paid placements for parents facing barriers to employment and providing dedicated programme coordination capacity.

Partnerships have been strengthened between NHS Grampian Employability, Work Experience Lead and the 3 regional LEPs where there will now be NHS Grampian representation at all LEPs. This should be a valuable collaboration going forward to support future employability programmes including the recent request from Scottish Government to provide paid placements for 20 individuals to participate in a parental employability programme within NHS Grampian. Recent links have also been established between NHS Grampian Anchors and the People and Culture teams which will be a valuable connection to further enhance and facilitate the Anchors actions going forward by embedding it within processes e.g. aligning more closely with work to promote staff health.

These developments strengthen NHS Grampian's role as an Anchor Organisation, improving pathways into fair and sustainable employment, and supporting workforce planning, recruitment and succession priorities across clinical and non-clinical services. However, progress is limited by capacity; delivering Anchors work without any additional resource within a very small employability team limits the ability to manage, coordinate and increase the range of work and jobs related initiatives.

Land and Assets

The overarching aim of the Lands & Assets pillar was to increase access to NHS Grampian estate and facilities for third sector and community groups supporting improvements in local health and wellbeing. This included enhancing access to greenspace within NHS sites and developing safe walking and cycling routes around hospital campuses to promote wellbeing and encourage sustainable travel.

Key developments:

- Completion of Leancoil Hospital community asset transfer (CAT), the process was extremely lengthy and was achieved through long-term partnership working since 2018.
- Strong multi-agency collaboration in development of Foresterhill mortuary including thoughtful design around the green space surrounding the building for quiet contemplation space for visitors and staff.
- Investment in environmental sustainability (LED upgrades, solar panels, biodiversity, active travel routes).

NHS Grampian is working to embed Anchor principles within estate, land, asset, and capital planning. Through strong governance and strategic investment, the Board is making progress in using its land and assets to support environmental sustainability, reduce carbon emissions, and deliver wider community benefits. A major estates rationalisation programme is underway, including the disposal of surplus properties, which is expected to reduce the overall estate footprint by almost 10%. The programme aims to maximise opportunities for asset sharing with partners and encourage innovative community use of local facilities to improve access to services. However, balancing financial savings from disposals with requests from third-sector and community organisations can be challenging, particularly where proposed uses are unsuitable, incompatible with healthcare operations, or raise issues relating to confidentiality, infection control, timing, or security.

All surplus properties are advertised for potential CAT opportunities. Anchor principles are also embedded within procurement and construction activities, while all investment plans for new or upgraded premises must consider alternative models of care and opportunities for shared use with community and third-sector partners. Although NHS Grampian seeks to support community use of assets, requirements to achieve best value for public funds can sometimes mean private-sector offers are preferred over community proposals. The Board continues to support co-location and partnership working with charities and community organisations, with examples including Friends of ANCHOR, ARCHIE, Maggie's Centre, the Royal Voluntary Service, and the Maud Village Trust. Future security requirements, including Martyn's Law, may create additional challenges for open community access to NHS buildings.

The Property Transaction Handbook (PTH) sets mandatory requirements for the disposal, sale, and lease of NHS Scotland properties and is a key consideration when applying Anchor principles to property decisions. It emphasises achieving best value through both financial and non-financial benefits. The handbook is currently being updated by the Scottish Government to strengthen consideration of stakeholder engagement, CATs, Community Wealth Building, and wider social value, further supporting the Anchor approach.

Enablers

Public Health has led and co-ordinated the delivery of the Anchors strategic plan along with key enablers to support progress including; access to data, raising the profile of Anchors work and partnership approaches.

Key developments:

- Engagement at regional level through the North East Public Health Alliance (NEPHA)
- Submission to Scottish Government on proposed CWB legislation and partnership working with the North East Anchors Group to explore opportunities to work across Grampian.
- Development of an Anchor Dashboard to support performance monitoring
- Development of Anchor communications via the "Plan for the Future" platform <https://www.nhsgrampian.org/about-us/planforthefuture/what-we-intend-to-do/places/anchor/>

- Through re-design within Public Health, additional resource has been secured to lead on Anchors work and align with Fairer Healthier Economies and Child Poverty workstreams.

In response to the proposed CWB legislation a paper was presented to NEPHA outlining potential areas of collaboration across Grampian. NEPHA supported exploration of potential areas for taking a Grampian wide approach and this has been progressed through the North East Anchors group although progress has been limited due to competing demands from partner organisations. NEPHA has noted opportunities for collaboration across the North East on CWB, while recognising the challenges of limited capacity and competing priorities.

Work to raise the profile of NHS Grampian as an Anchor Institution within its own workforce has faced challenges, particularly in the context of being at Stage 4 of the NHS Scotland Support and Intervention Framework. Anchor leads have remained mindful of ongoing pressures, particularly in relation to procurement and recruitment processes and how these messages might be received e.g. restrictions on non-discretionary spending versus messaging to spend locally. There are also unique local challenges with the name 'Anchor' related to the new Family Hospital. Corporate communication colleagues are helping to create clear messaging for staff to clarify the differences.

NHS Grampian has two years of Anchor metrics data, which has been incorporated into a dashboard developed by Health Intelligence colleagues to support monitoring of progress and inform future Anchor activity [Anchors Institution Dashboard \(7\).pdf](#). Once the latest two-year dataset is fully published, it will be added to the dashboard, providing four years of data and enabling more targeted action. Although the new data has only recently become available and a full analysis has not yet been completed, this will be prioritised going forward. In addition, Public Health Scotland has developed a scoring template that has been used to undertake a baseline assessment across each Anchor pillar, helping to identify strengths and priority areas for improvement. The findings from this baselining exercise have informed the 2026/27 implementation plan and have also been incorporated into the dashboard.

Key Strengths of Anchors Progress

- Strong alignment with national policy
- Clear transition from planning to implementation
- Leadership provided across the pillars

Key Risks and Challenges

- Capacity within teams to progress/prioritise actions given the current system pressures and financial position of the Board with no additional resource to deliver Anchors work.
- Dependencies on external partners for employability activity.
- Complexity of achieving system-level change across procurement, estates, and workforce functions.
- Inconsistencies in policy and partner practices contributing to variable levels of engagement and buy-in.

Next Steps (2026/27)

NHS Grampian has made progress on delivery of actions; however, work to fully embed it into organisational processes is hampered by a lack of capacity across the system and the substantial pressures being experienced by the Board. Continued focus is required to embed change at system level, strengthen measurement, and mitigate identified delivery risks. Key areas of focus should include;

- Strengthen measurement and reporting including further development of dashboard.
- Continue embedding Anchors approach into organisational systems and decisions.
- Address areas of pressure e.g. how we recruit and retain staff in areas with high rates of vacancy and turnover and address rural inequalities.
- Consider alignment with other strategic goals including child poverty; [Scotland's Population Health Framework - gov.scot](#) and Fairer Healthier Economies: [a-healthier-fairer-and-more-productive-scotland.pdf](#)

2.3.1 Quality / Patient Care

Although this report does not have a direct impact on the quality of care, the initiatives within the Employability Pillar aim to improve recruitment and retention, strengthen staff experience, and may contribute positively to patient outcomes.

2.3.2 Workforce

A collaborative initiative involving the Employability, Public Health, and Estates and Facilities teams led to a series of staff engagement workshops with Domestic Services employees. Using a *Putting People First* approach, the workshops explored what it means to be an NHS Grampian employee. Discussions identified a range of positive experiences, including supportive policies that help staff balance commitments both inside and outside of work. They also highlighted opportunities for improvement, particularly in raising awareness and recognition of the valuable contribution made by domestic staff. Work is already underway to implement the recommendations arising from the engagement, including consideration of how this approach can be extended to other staff groups. The findings were presented to the Grampian Area Partnership Forum and the NHS Grampian Board in August. A summary of the work can be found here [Reflections from Domestic & Support Services Team Workshops](#)

2.3.3 Financial

There are no impacts on finance as a direct result of this report.

2.3.4 Risk Assessment / Management

This report provides an overview of our work as an Anchor organisation. The examples of projects that have been undertaken and are ongoing contribute to the mitigation of the risk of worsening population health outcomes and deteriorating workforce engagement.

2.3.5 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

This report is for information purposes only, so the Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

2.3.6 Other impacts

All are outlined in the report.

2.3.7 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

- Public Health Monitoring & Governance
- Anchors Strategic Group
- North East Anchors Group

2.3.8 Route to the Meeting

- Population Health Programme Board 27th August 2026
- Population Health Committee 30th July 2026

2.4 Recommendation(s)

The Board is asked to:

- Note the positive overall progress in the delivery of our Anchors programme, with implementation now underway across all pillars, and acknowledge the ongoing challenges in fully embedding this work as a result of capacity constraints across the system.
- Endorse the continued embedding of Anchor principles within organisational decision-making processes.

3 Appendix/List of appendices

The following appendix/appendices are included with this report:

- Appendix 1 – Anchors 25/26 highlight report

From Intentionality to Population Health Impact

How the Anchors approach maximises the potential to tackle the wider inequalities across Grampian



Predicted **21%** increase
in burden of ill health
over next 20 years



NHS Grampian employs **16,800** people.
Key lever for Fair Work, inclusive
opportunities, healthier communities



Reduce child poverty: to
build a brighter future for
children across Grampian

Dashboard to track activity

3 Levers for wider impact



Workforce. Fair work and
pathways to support those
furthest from job market

Parental Employability Programme

Supporting parents and carers to build skills,
confidence and employment opportunities



FLEXIBLE HOURS
16-30
HOURS PER WEEK
Opportunities to
suit different
needs and
commitments



ENTRY LEVEL POSITIONS
No prior experience
required – just a
willingness to learn and
grow
*We provide the training
and support you need*



WHO CAN APPLY?
Parents and carers
looking to return to
work, build
experience and
secure a brighter
future



**Engagement
with Domestic
team**

<https://sway.cloud.microsoft/xlIX65dfmxaoupjx?ref=Link&loc=play>



Spending. Increase spend
with local businesses and
SME's to support local jobs
and strengthen the local
economy.



0.5% Increase in local
spend from
2024/25 → 2025/26



Lands & Assets. Maximise
community wealth and
wellbeing through estates,
assets and local
developments.

Green space at new Grampian
Mortuary and a successful community
asset transfer with Leancoill Hospital



ANCHORS

WORK & JOBS - PROCUREMENT - LAND & ASSETS -
SERVICE DESIGN & DELIVERY - BECOMING AN EXEMPLARY
ANCHOR INSTITUTION (Latest Year)

