

Area Clinical Forum Report to Grampian NHS Board Meeting on the 11th June 2026.

Purpose of Report

This report updates the Grampian NHS Board on key issues arising from the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) meeting on 6th May 2026.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to be assured that the ACF is fulfilling its role as an advisory committee to the Board and Chief Executive Team.

The Area Clinical Forum (ACF) met on 6 May 2026 to consider a range of strategic, operational and clinical issues relevant to NHS Grampian. The discussion highlighted both progress in key transformation programmes and ongoing challenges associated with operating within a complex healthcare environment, including the organisation's continued position at Stage 4 escalation within the Scottish Government Support and Intervention Framework.

Vaccination and Immunisation – Annual Report

The Forum reviewed the Vaccination and Immunisation Annual Report, noting the significant contribution of vaccination programmes to improving population health outcomes and reducing hospital admissions. Ongoing pressures include increasing cases of pertussis, tuberculosis and measles, alongside the challenge of delivering expanding programmes within static financial resources. Priority areas include improving uptake in underserved populations and strengthening performance monitoring frameworks.

Clinical Quality and Safety Improvement Work

An update on clinical governance emphasised the need to strengthen quality and safety systems across NHS Grampian. Actions underway include targeted improvement work at Dr Gray's Hospital, establishment of a Clinical Quality and Safety Improvement Board, and a planned Healthcare Improvement Scotland diagnostic review. Strengthening adverse event reporting and organisational learning were highlighted as key priorities.

This renewed focus on Quality and Safety was fully supported by the ACF and indeed it is important to note this should sit as a top priority within all clinical services. Members from ACF will actively engage with this new improvement Board and provide clinical advice from across the clinical spectrum.

Integrated Acute Pathways – Milestone Report

Progress within the Integrated Acute Pathways programme was acknowledged, with improvements in referral processes, waiting list management and collaboration between primary and secondary care. Challenges remain in relation to organisational culture and leadership alignment. A full evaluation report is expected following programme completion.

The forum welcomed the update, thanked the authors for sharing the milestone report and acknowledged the contribution of time and leadership from operational managers, clinical leads, clinical administration teams and corporate support services in completing the work to date.

It was acknowledged that often the pace of transformation can be challenging and ensuring the correct voices are around the conversations will create the culture to embed this work as business as usual.

It was also noted that it would be important to evaluate what these new pathways have meant to patients and have improved access that is seen as equitable.

AI – Use in Healthcare Services

The Forum also considered the use of Artificial Intelligence in healthcare, recognising opportunities for efficiency alongside risks related to misinformation and inappropriate use in clinical decision-making. The development of clear organisational guidance and staff awareness was identified as essential.

It was also recognised that the use of AI will increase and safeguarding the accuracy of information is essential to prevent false answers becoming embedded. That said it will become increasingly useful to help with administrative tasks such as report writing. It is to be noted that AI helped in the production of this report.

Updates from Advisory Committees

Advisory Committee updates highlighted workforce and service sustainability risks, including reduced capacity in head and neck oncology services, alongside gaps in service provision such as ADHD pathways. Financial constraints, workforce pressures and information governance issues continue to impact service delivery.

The Board is asked to note this report, acknowledge the key risks identified, and support the continuation of the organisation's quality improvement and service transformation agenda. Particular focus for the forum will be to advise on the quality and safety improvement work and ensuring that clinical knowledge can help shape any culture shift required to empower these principles for our patients and staff.

Mark Burrell

Chair ACF, 25 May 2026