

Area Clinical Forum Report to NHS Grampian Board

Board Meeting 13.08.26 Open Session Item 7.1

Purpose of Report

This report provides the NHS Grampian Board with an update on the key issues discussed at the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) meeting held on 24 June 2026.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to take assurance that the Area Clinical Forum continues to fulfil its advisory role to the NHS Grampian Board and Chief Executive Team, providing constructive clinical insight on strategic, operational and quality matters.

The Area Clinical Forum met on 24 June 2026 to consider a range of strategic, operational and clinical issues relevant to NHS Grampian. A lighter agenda than previous meetings allowed greater emphasis on feedback and discussion from the Forum's advisory committees.

Director of Public Health Update

Chris Littlejohn, Deputy Director of Public Health, presented an update focusing primarily on adult weight management services. Discussion highlighted the significant proportion of the population living with overweight and obesity, the associated long-term health burden, and the opportunities for effective weight management to improve outcomes across multiple disease pathways, particularly cardiovascular disease. The Forum also discussed equity considerations associated with access to GLP-1 therapies, noting that some treatments are accessed privately, creating challenges for data collection and population-level monitoring. Members recognised that future demand for such treatments may increase, and that any expansion of access will require careful consideration of clinical benefit, equity and financial sustainability.

Updates from Advisory Committees

A thematic review of issues raised by advisory committees identified several recurring challenges. Infrastructure constraints continue to affect the availability of suitable consultation space, particularly in services such as Clinical Psychology where sensitive and complex patient discussions require appropriate environments. Members highlighted the importance of understanding the unintended consequences of service changes, recognising that improvements in one area can inadvertently create pressures elsewhere. The Forum also discussed the increasing use of artificial intelligence within job applications. Concerns were expressed regarding the volume and quality of applications potentially generated using AI tools, and members suggested that organisational guidance from Human Resources may be beneficial. The GP Sub-Committee reported positively on the opening of the GP Walk-In Centres and the GP and Mental Health Teaching Centre. The Forum was assured that appropriate governance arrangements are in place and noted that the impact of these developments will continue to be monitored. Concerns were also raised regarding workplace culture and the experiences of resident doctors. Members acknowledged that incivility within the workplace can adversely affect staff wellbeing, team performance and ultimately patient safety. These matters continue to be

considered through medical leadership structures and the NHS Grampian Culture Board. Alongside these challenges, committees reported a number of significant achievements, including positive executive engagement, developments within the Royal College of Pharmacy, and celebrations recognising the Silver Jubilee of the combined Allied Health Professions groups.

Clinical Quality and Safety Improvement Work

The Executive Medical Director provided an update on the strengthening of clinical governance arrangements across NHS Grampian. The newly established Clinical Quality and Safety Improvement Board is now operational, with two Area Clinical Forum representatives contributing advisory input. Members noted that the ongoing Healthcare Improvement Scotland diagnostic review may identify additional opportunities to strengthen governance systems and provide assurance regarding organisational oversight. Priorities include improving adverse event reporting, strengthening organisational learning, identifying missed opportunities for improvement, and ensuring lessons learned are translated into sustainable actions. The Forum strongly supported this renewed emphasis on quality and safety and recognised it as a key organisational priority. The ACF anticipates that quality and safety improvement will remain a standing item on future agendas and will continue to provide clinical advice to support cultural and organisational change that benefits both patients and staff.

Conclusion

The Board is invited to note this report, acknowledge the key risks and challenges identified, and support the continuation of NHS Grampian's quality improvement and service transformation programmes. The Area Clinical Forum remains committed to providing expert clinical advice to help shape improvements in quality, safety, service delivery and organisational culture across NHS Grampian.

Mark Burrell
Chair, Area Clinical Forum
August 2026