

Meeting:	NHS Grampian Board
Meeting date:	13 August 2026
Item Number:	8.2
Title:	Operational Priorities – NHS Scotland
Responsible Executive:	Gail Woodcock, Director of Strategy, Transformation and Performance
Report Author:	Gail Woodcock, Director of Strategy, Transformation and Performance & Preston Gan, Head of Performance

1 Purpose and recommendations

This is presented to the Board for:

- Assurance
- Endorsement

Recommendation(s)

The Board is asked to:

- Assurance** – review and scrutinise the information provided in this paper and confirm that it provides assurance on the extent to which NHS Grampian's 2026/27 priorities are aligned with the national operational priorities and First Minister's 100-Day Commitments set out in the letter from Christine McLaughlin, Chief Operating Officer and Depute Chief Executive, NHS Scotland, dated 13 July 2026.
- Endorsement** – endorse the intention to incorporate any new or additional requirements arising from the national operational priorities and First Minister's 100-Day Commitments, where appropriate, within existing delivery plans, performance reporting and governance arrangements, with clear visibility for the Board on where and how they will be progressed.
- Future reporting** – note that progress against these priorities and commitments will be reported through existing Executive and Board governance routes, including the How Are We Doing report and relevant programme board updates, and will inform preparation for the forthcoming mid-year review process.

This report relates to:

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

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) [delete all that are not relevant to this report]:

- ☐ Inability to meet population demand for Planned Care
- ☐ Significant delays in the delivery of Unscheduled Care
- Deviation from recognised service standards of practice and delivery
- ☐ Inability to achieve the aspirations set out in Plan for the Future due to financial resource constraints and inefficiencies
- ☐ Inability to reduce demand through citizen engagement
- ☐ Insufficient change and innovation to create a system which can meet demand and deliver on our strategic intent
- ☐ Deteriorating Workforce Engagement
- ☐ Worsening health in Grampian particularly in those who experience multiple disadvantages

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

The board is asked to consider the letter (Appendix 1) dated 13 July 2026 from Christine McLaughlin, Chief Operating Officer and Depute Chief Executive, NHS Scotland. The letter provides further detail on the operational priorities for NHS Boards for the remainder of 2026/27 and outlines the contribution required from Boards in supporting the delivery of the First Minister's 100-Day Commitments.

The letter confirms that progress against these priorities will inform the forthcoming mid-year review process for territorial NHS Boards.

2.2 Background

In February 2026, NHS Scotland set out eight high-level operational priorities for delivery during 2026/27. The subsequent letter of 13 July 2026 provides greater clarity on expectations for the remainder of the year following completion of Quarter 1 and the recent Scottish Parliamentary election.

The priorities focus on:

- Reducing the longest waits for planned care and improving cancer performance.

- Increasing productivity across elective and diagnostic services.
- Improving flow and performance in unscheduled care.
- Expanding Hospital at Home.
- Supporting safe and high-quality maternity and neonatal services.
- Improving support and services for mental health, neurodevelopment and learning disabilities.
- Accelerating digital access and modernisation.
- Developing population health approaches and capability.

The letter also identifies the First Minister's 100-Day Commitments requiring NHS Board support, including GP walk-in centres, waiting times improvement, development of a national hospital flow plan, heart and lung health MOTs and community audiology services

2.3 Assessment

The priorities articulated within the national letter are broadly aligned with NHS Grampian's approved 2026/27 priorities, strategic objectives and associated performance framework. Many of the areas highlighted, including planned care recovery, unscheduled care improvement, Hospital at Home, mental health, digital transformation and population health, are already reflected within existing programmes of work and performance monitoring arrangements.

The national letter provides additional specificity around expected trajectories and outcomes, including:

- Elimination of waits over 52 weeks.
- Improvement in cancer waiting times performance.
- Improved four-hour access performance and system flow metrics.
- Expansion of Hospital at Home capacity.
- Delivery of national digital programmes.
- Population health maturity assessment and action planning.

A mapping exercise has been undertaken to assess the extent to which the national operational priorities and First Minister's 100-Day Commitments are reflected within NHS Grampian's published 2026/27 Priorities for Delivery, associated actions, key performance indicators, reporting mechanisms and governance arrangements. This demonstrates a strong degree of alignment across the majority of national priorities, with many expectations already incorporated within existing programmes of work and performance monitoring arrangements. A small number of areas are not currently visible within the published priorities, actions or performance measures; this should not be interpreted as an absence of activity or oversight, but highlights where further mapping is required. NHS Grampian will work with relevant Executive Leads and operational teams to identify where these requirements are being progressed and strengthen the mapping to provide clearer visibility of delivery against national expectations and the associated 100-Day Commitments.

2.3.1 Quality / Patient Care

A key principle and focus of NHS Grampian's agreed strategic priorities for 2026/27 seek to support with ensuring delivery of the highest standards of quality and patient care and outcomes in NHS Grampian. Associated and developing Key Performance Indicators assist in evidencing that the intended improvements are being achieved.

2.3.2 Workforce

We know levels of staff engagement and how they feel about working in an organisation which listens, responds and empowers staff has a correlation with attracting people to come to work in the organisation, retention of staff, levels of bottom-up change and innovation and staff health and wellbeing/sickness absence. NHS Grampian strategic priority, People, Leadership and Governance, includes focusing on improving staff experience, health and wellbeing, greater engagement and ensuring staff are empowered in terms of decision-making. Oversight for progress against this priority sits with the Culture and Leadership Programme Board.

2.3.3 Financial

Progressing financial sustainability and balance in relation to prevention, clinical performance and staff governance remains a key priority for 2026/27. The oversight of delivery of the financial savings will remain with the Value and Sustainability Programme Board. This will be aligned closely with the redesign and transformation work to ensure sustainability in both the short and longer term, including affordability and best value.

2.3.4 Risk Assessment / Management

The agreement and maintaining focus on a clear set of priorities is a key action for managing Strategic Risk 3006 (Change and Innovation), along with a number of other organisational strategic risks, supported by ongoing monitoring of progress and early escalation where delivery or impact is at risk. Many of the actions within the strategic priorities focus on reducing known risks to the organisation.

2.3.5 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

Delivery of the changes required to progress aspects of each priority will require leads to ensure impact assessments are undertaken in line with statutory duties wherever necessary. This detail will be contained within the individual programme plans and NHS Grampian's Integrated Impact Assessments process is in place to support teams and services to ensure change is cognisant of equality, health inequality, and socioeconomic impacts.

2.3.6 Other impacts

Not applicable.

2.3.7 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

Wide engagement across internal and external stakeholders was undertaken to support the development of NHG Grampians Strategic Priorities for 2026/27.

2.3.8 Route to the Meeting

This report builds on the report to NHS Board in March 2026 entitled “NHS Grampian 2026/27 Priorities”.

2.4 Recommendation(s)

The Board is asked to:

- a. **Assurance** – review and scrutinise the information provided in this paper and confirm that it provides assurance on the extent to which NHS Grampian’s 2026/27 priorities are aligned with the national operational priorities and First Minister’s 100-Day Commitments set out in the letter from Christine McLaughlin, Chief Operating Officer and Depute Chief Executive, NHS Scotland, dated 13 July 2026.
- b. **Endorsement** – endorse the intention to incorporate any new or additional requirements arising from the national operational priorities and First Minister’s 100-Day Commitments, where appropriate, within existing delivery plans, performance reporting and governance arrangements, with clear visibility for the Board on where and how they will be progressed.
- c. **Future reporting** – note that progress against these priorities and commitments will be reported through existing Executive and Board governance routes, including the How Are We Doing report and relevant programme board updates, and will inform preparation for the forthcoming mid-year review process.

3 Appendix/List of appendices

The following appendix/appendices are included with this report:

- Appendix 1 – Letter from NHS Scotland Chief Operating Officer and Depute Chief Executive: Operational Priorities Follow up 13 July 2026
- Appendix 2 – Table mapping SG National Priorities with NHSG 2022/27 Priorities for Delivery