

Meeting:	NHS Grampian Board
Meeting date:	13 August 2026
Item Number:	10
Title:	Establishment of the NHS Grampian Planned Care Improvement Support Group (Scotland East)
Responsible Executive:	Laura Skaife-Knight, Chief Executive
Report Author:	Geraldine Fraser, Chief Officer – Acute Services

1 Purpose and Recommendations

This report is presented to the Board for:

- Assurance
- Decision
- Endorsement

Recommendations

- Note the establishment of the NHS Grampian Planned Care Improvement Support Group (Scotland East)
- Confirm assurance that the proposed support arrangements provide a structured, evidence-based mechanism to assess planned care capacity, productivity, governance and delivery maturity.
- Agree the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1 as the basis for the Support Group's initial phase of work.

This report relates to:

- NHS Grampian Strategy: Plan for the Future – Pathways and timely access to planned care
- Board Annual Delivery Plan – Planned Care recovery and reduction of long waits
- Service Operational Plan
- Government policy/directive
- Emerging issue

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

- Safe
- Effective
- Person Centred

Relevant strategic risks

- Inability to meet population demand for Planned Care
- Inability to achieve the aspirations set out in Plan for the Future due to financial resource constraints and inefficiencies
- Insufficient change and innovation to create a system which can meet demand and deliver on our strategic intent

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

NHS Grampian continues to face significant planned care delivery challenges, including delivery of national waiting time ambitions and the management of long waits. The NHS Grampian Planned Care Improvement Support Group (Scotland East) is being established to provide focused support, assurance and challenge.

The Board is asked to note the establishment of the Support Group, scrutinise the intended support model and approve the attached Terms of Reference. The immediate aim of the initial phase is to map a path to zero 52 weeks waits, beginning with Orthopaedic, or to establish the maximum achievable trajectory through a combination of local NHS Grampian and Sub-National East interventions.

2.2 Background

The Terms of Reference set out that the Support Group is a supportive, evidence-based and improvement-focused mechanism. It will identify areas of good practice and opportunities to enhance planned care performance and recovery delivery within NHS Grampian and with support from Scotland East. Orthopaedics has been selected as the pilot specialty through which a structured assessment framework will be tested.

The Terms of Reference also state that the intention is to establish an objective and repeatable framework which can be utilised across other specialties following completion of the initial phase. The Support Group's work is therefore relevant both to immediate Orthopaedic recovery and to wider planned care improvement capability.

2.3 Assessment

The establishment of the Support Group provides a defined structure for external support, improvement challenge and assurance. The proposed approach is expected to strengthen confidence in recovery planning, provide a structured assessment of service maturity, and identify both internal opportunities and regional support opportunities.

Element	Board-level summary
Purpose	To provide an objective assessment of Planned Care, focusing on planning maturity, capacity management, utilisation, governance and continuous improvement arrangements.
Scope	Phase I will focus on Orthopaedic Scheduled Care, including strategic planning, infrastructure and resources, operational performance, workforce planning, improvement activity, and governance and assurance.

Support framework	The work will assess performance and organisational maturity across six domains: Demand, Capacity, Activity and Queue (DCAQ) maturity and accuracy; infrastructure and capacity; utilisation and productivity; consultant job planning; Centre for Sustainable Delivery (CfSD) Productive Opportunities; and governance and assurance.
Methodology	The support will include document review, data and performance analysis, stakeholder interviews, collaborative workshops, comparative assessment against recognised good practice, maturity assessment and validation of findings with service.
Deliverables	Expected outputs include a maturity assessment, improvement and recovery plan, and regional support where appropriate.
Expected outcome	A clear, objective and evidence-based assessment of capacity, productivity, governance and delivery maturity, with a practical recovery plan to support sustainable improvement.

2.3.1 Quality / Patient Care

The Support Group is intended to improve patient access by identifying practical opportunities to improve throughput, reduce waiting times and strengthen oversight arrangements. The focus on long waits is relevant to patient safety, experience and equitable access, particularly for patients waiting over 52 weeks for outpatient appointments or treatment.

2.3.2 Workforce

The Terms of Reference include workforce resources, and alignment between workforce deployment and demand within scope.

2.3.3 Financial

The Terms of Reference specify that the Support Group will not undertake a formal financial audit. Financial implications may nevertheless arise from recommendations relating to productivity, capacity, mutual aid, regional capacity sharing or other support opportunities. Any financial implications will require separate assessment through established NHS Grampian governance routes.

2.3.4 Risk Assessment / Management

Risk	Mitigation through proposed Support Group
Population demand for Planned Care	The Support Group will assess demand, capacity, activity and queue modelling, capacity planning and recovery assumptions to strengthen confidence in planned care recovery.
Service standards and waiting time ambitions	The focus on pathways to reduce waits greater than 52 weeks which supports delivery against national waiting time ambitions.

Financial resource constraints and inefficiencies	The support model will identify productive opportunities, utilisation improvements and regional support options, although a formal financial audit is out of scope.
Change and innovation	The work will test a repeatable structured assessment framework capable of wider deployment across specialties.

2.3.5 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

Reducing long waits and improving planned care access are relevant to equitable access and patient experience.

Route to the Meeting

- Executive Team meeting 28th July 2026.

2.4 Recommendation(s)

The Board is asked to:

- Note the establishment of the NHS Grampian Planned Care Improvement Support Group (Scotland East)
- Confirm assurance that the proposed support arrangements provide a structured, evidence-based mechanism to assess planned care capacity, productivity, governance and delivery maturity.
- Agree the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1 as the basis for the Support Group's initial phase of work.

Appendix / List of appendices

The following appendix is included with this report:

- Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference: NHS Grampian Planned Care Improvement Support Group (Scotland East), Version 6, dated 20 July 2026.

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference: NHS Grampian Planned Care Improvement Support Group (Scotland East)

The Terms of Reference are attached below for Board approval and reference.

Terms of Reference (ToR)

NHS Grampian Planned Care Improvement Support Group (Scotland East)

Phase I: Orthopaedics

Version: 6

Status: Final

Date: July 20th 2026

Sponsor: NHS Grampian CEO

1. Background

NHS Grampian continues to face challenges in the delivery of Scheduled Care and achievement of national waiting time ambitions with bigger backlogs than any other Board in Scotland.

The aim of standing up the NHS Grampian Improvement Support Group (Scotland East) is to map a path to zero for 52-weeks for NHS Grampian which includes 2 key areas of focus:

1. Assurance regarding current arrangements at NHS Grampian (including compliance with recognised good practice, grip and control and maximising productive opportunities)
2. Leveraging support from Sub-National (Scotland East) to drive further improvement opportunities to the NHS Grampian landing position for 2026/27 for 52-weeks

Orthopaedics has been selected as the pilot specialty through which a structured assessment framework will be tested. The support will assess service capability, planning maturity, utilisation of resources, governance effectiveness and improvement opportunities.

The particular focus will be placed upon:

Eliminating waits greater than 52 weeks for Orthopaedic treatment by 31 March 2027, or establishing the maximum achievable trajectory toward that objective through a combination of local and Sub-National East interventions.

The support will assess the relative contribution that both NHS Grampian productivity improvements and regional support arrangements could make toward achieving this ambition.

The intention is to establish an objective and repeatable framework which can be utilised across other specialties following completion of this initial phase.

This is intended to be supportive, evidence-based and improvement-focused, identifying both areas of good practice and opportunities to enhance performance and recovery delivery – both within NHS Grampian and with support from across Scotland East to improve the performance position.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this improvement work is to provide an objective assessment of NHS Grampian's Orthopaedic Scheduled Care service, focusing on the maturity of planning processes, capacity management, utilisation, governance and continuous improvement arrangements.

The East supportive work will identify practical opportunities to improve throughput, reduce waiting times, strengthen oversight arrangements and increase confidence in delivery plans. This will include opportunities internal to NHS Grampian and East Sub-National solutions that could drive and support improvements.

3. Objectives

The improvement work will:

- Assess the maturity, robustness and accuracy of Demand, Capacity, Activity and Queue (DCAQ) modelling and forecasting processes.
 - Evaluate the sufficiency and deployment of available infrastructure and capacity including:
 - Theatre capacity
 - Bed capacity
 - Outpatient capacity
 - Workforce resources
 - Review utilisation levels across available resources and identify opportunities for optimisation.
 - Assess consultant job planning arrangements and alignment to service demand and recovery objectives.
 - Evaluate implementation and impact of Centre for Sustainable Delivery (CfSD) Productive Opportunities.
 - Review governance, performance management and assurance arrangements supporting Scheduled Care delivery.
 - Identify strengths, risks, constraints and dependencies impacting performance.
 - Develop practical recommendations to support sustainable improvement and enhanced organisational maturity.
 - Test and refine a structured assessment framework capable of wider deployment across NHS Grampian specialties.
 - Identify both internal and Sub-National East opportunities to support achievement of Orthopaedic recovery trajectories.
-

4. Scope In Scope

The support will in Phase 1 focus on Orthopaedic Scheduled Care including:

Strategic Planning

- DCAQ modelling methodology
- Demand forecasting
- Capacity planning processes
- Recovery planning assumptions
- Data quality and validation

Infrastructure and Resources

- Theatre capacity
- Bed capacity
- Outpatient capacity
- Diagnostic dependencies
- Workforce capacity
- Service constraints

Operational Performance

- Theatre utilisation
- Clinic utilisation
- Productivity measures
- Lost capacity analysis
- Cancellation performance
- Waiting list management

Workforce Planning

- Consultant job planning arrangements
- Alignment between workforce deployment and demand
- Delivery of programmed activity
- Governance of job planning processes

Improvement Activity

- CfSD Productive Opportunities
- Local productivity initiatives
- Benefits realisation
- Sustainability arrangements

Governance and Assurance

- 2 Governance structures
- 3 Performance reporting
- 4 Escalation processes
- 5 Executive oversight
- 6 Accountability arrangements
- 7 Risk management processes

Out of Scope

The support will not:

- Conduct individual staff performance assessment.
 - Undertake a formal financial audit.
 - Lead implementation of recommendations.
 - Review non-Scheduled Care services unless they materially impact Orthopaedic performance.
-

5. Support Framework

The support will assess performance and organisational maturity against six domains.

Domain 1: DCAQ Maturity and Accuracy

Areas of focus:

- Data quality and validation
- Forecasting methodology
- Modelling assumptions
- Scenario planning
- Alignment between plans and operational delivery
- Use of modelling to support decision-making

Key Question

Can NHS Grampian confidently rely upon its DCAQ models to support effective recovery planning and delivery?

Domain 2: Infrastructure and Capacity

Support Areas:

- Theatre provision
- Bed availability
- Outpatient infrastructure
- Workforce capacity
- Operational constraints
- Future capacity requirements

Key Question

Is sufficient capacity available and appropriately configured to support planned activity levels?

Domain 3: Utilisation and Productivity

Support Areas:

1. Theatre utilisation
2. Outpatient utilisation
3. Workforce utilisation
4. Lost sessions
5. Productivity benchmarking
6. Performance variation

Key Question

Is available capacity being utilised as effectively as possible?

Domain 4: Consultant Job Planning

Support Areas:

1. Job planning arrangements
2. Alignment to demand
3. Direct Clinical Care allocation
4. Review processes
5. Flexibility and responsiveness of plans

Key Question

Do consultant job planning arrangements support optimal delivery of Orthopaedic services?

Domain 5: CfSD Productive Opportunities

Support Areas:

1. Opportunities identified
2. Progress with implementation
3. Benefits realisation
4. Barriers and enablers
5. Sustainability arrangements

Key Question

Is NHS Grampian maximising productivity opportunities identified through CfSD and local improvement programmes?

Domain 6: Governance and Assurance

Support Areas:

1. Governance arrangements
2. Performance review structures
3. Executive oversight
4. Escalation processes
5. Accountability mechanisms
6. Risk management

Key Question

Do governance arrangements provide sufficient oversight, challenge and assurance to support delivery?

6. Methodology

The support will be completed through a combination of:

1. Document review
2. Data and performance analysis
3. Stakeholder interviews
4. Collaborative workshops
5. Comparative assessment against recognised good practice
6. Maturity assessment across each review domain
7. Validation of findings with service and executive leadership

Evidence will be triangulated through both quantitative and qualitative information sources.

7. Specific Areas of Focus

In addition to the six domains, the support will specifically seek to identify opportunities which support NHS Grampian in achieving Scheduled Care recovery ambitions.

Internal Productive Opportunities

The support will identify and assess opportunities within NHS Grampian, including:

1. Theatre productivity improvements
2. Outpatient productivity improvements
3. Waiting list validation and management
4. Optimisation of consultant capacity
5. Job planning redesign where appropriate
6. Improved scheduling and booking arrangements

7. Reduction in cancellations and lost capacity
8. Introduction or acceleration of CfSD Productive Opportunities
9. Patient pathway redesign and flow improvements
10. Enhanced operational performance management

Recommendations will be prioritised based upon impact, deliverability and implementation timescales.

Sub-National East Opportunities

Where local opportunities alone are insufficient to deliver the required trajectory, the review will identify opportunities for support across the Sub-National East network.

Potential opportunities may include:

1. Cross-board mutual aid
2. Regional Orthopaedic capacity sharing
3. Access to available theatre capacity within neighbouring Boards
4. Regional outpatient solutions
5. Workforce collaboration opportunities
6. Waiting list balancing initiatives
7. Shared improvement programmes
8. Regional elective recovery initiatives

Particular focus will be given to opportunities capable of accelerating reductions in long-waiting patients.

8. Governance and Membership

Support and Assurance Group

A Support and Assurance Group will provide oversight, challenge and support throughout the process.

The Group will:

1. Provide expert advice and challenge.
2. Support validation of findings.
3. Identify strategic and regional opportunities.
4. Consider wider system solutions where local actions alone may be insufficient.
5. Support development of recovery recommendations.
6. Provide interim updates and final report to NHS Grampian CEO

Membership

Name	Role
Jim Crombie (Chair)	Sub-National East Chief Operating Officer (Interim)

Gordon Frame	National Director, Planned Care
Hazel Neilson	Head of Access, NHS Lothian
Jane McKenna	National Orthopaedic Performance Lead
Wendy Reid	Sub-National East Head of Performance, PMO and Business

Additional subject matter experts may be invited as required.

NHS Grampian Leadership Team

Responsible for:

1. Providing access to information and stakeholders.
 2. Supporting evidence gathering and analysis.
 3. Validating findings and recommendations.
 4. Supporting development of implementation plans.
-

10. Deliverables

Interim Outputs

1. Agreed methodology
2. Confirmed assessment framework
3. Scoped information requirements
4. Emerging findings and risks

Final Outputs

Diagnostic Assessment Report

Including:

1. Executive summary
2. Findings against each domain
3. Assessment of current maturity
4. Identified strengths and good practice
5. Risks, constraints and dependencies
6. Recommendations for improvement

Maturity Assessment

Each domain will be assessed using a five-point maturity scale:

Level	Description
1	Emerging
2	Developing
3	Established
4	Mature
5	Optimised

Improvement and Recovery Plan

A prioritised action plan covering:

1. Immediate actions (0-3 months)
2. Short-term actions (3-6 months)
3. Medium-term actions (6-12 months)

Regional Support Assessment

Identification of:

1. Internal NHS Grampian opportunities
2. Sub-National East opportunities
3. Potential impact of each intervention on recovery trajectories

11. Expected Outcomes

The support package will deliver:

1. An objective assessment of NHS Grampian Orthopaedic Scheduled Care performance and maturity.
2. A prioritised list of internal productivity and improvement opportunities.
3. Identification of Sub-National East support opportunities.
4. Recommendations for strengthening governance, assurance and performance oversight.
5. A practical delivery plan with actions, owners and indicative timescales.
6. A framework capable of wider application across other specialties.

12. Long Waits Objective

A key outcome of the support will be to identify and quantify the actions and opportunities capable of supporting achievement of NHS Grampian's Orthopaedic recovery trajectory.

Particular focus will be placed upon:

Eliminating waits greater than 52 weeks for Orthopaedic treatment by 31 March 2027, or establishing the maximum achievable trajectory toward that objective through a combination of local and Sub-National East interventions.

The support will assess the relative contribution that both NHS Grampian productivity improvements and regional support arrangements could make toward achieving this ambition.

13. Success Criteria

The support will be considered successful where it:

1. Provides an objective and evidence-based assessment.
2. Achieves stakeholder agreement on key findings and risks.
3. Identifies clear and actionable improvement opportunities.
4. Strengthens assurance regarding Orthopaedic recovery plans.
5. Supports sustainable improvements in Scheduled Care performance.
6. Identifies opportunities to accelerate reductions in long waits.
7. Establishes a repeatable assessment methodology for wider adoption across NHS Grampian.
8. Supports delivery of the ambition to achieve a **0 > 52-week Orthopaedic waiting list position by 31 March 2027.**

Outcome Statement

To provide NHS Grampian with a clear, objective and evidence-based assessment of Orthopaedic Scheduled Care capacity, productivity, governance and delivery maturity; identify both internal and Sub-National East improvement opportunities; and establish a practical recovery plan that supports sustainable performance improvement and achievement of the ambition to eliminate waits greater than 52 weeks by 31 March 2027.