

Area Clinical Forum Report to Grampian NHS Board Meeting on the 19th February 2026.

Board Meeting 19.02.26 Open Session Item 6.1

Purpose of Report

This report updates the Grampian NHS Board on key issues arising from the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) meeting on 14th January 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.

Unscheduled Care Improvement plan.

Carrie Stephen, Programme Lead, and Stephen Friar, Deputy Medical Director, updated the Forum on the work streams that are under way as part of the USC improvement plan. The Forum was updated on the 17 workstreams that have been started and noted the progress of these. Of note the GP lead post was seen as vital to allow the whole system approach to 3 tactical options of reducing delays, reducing length of stay and reducing admissions.

It was noted by the Forum that the USC pathways are often complex, and many interdependencies exist across the whole system. It was also important to see how the measures of improvement will be mapped as we move forward and ensuring that these stay on track not only in ARI but across the region.

The Forum welcomed the update and there was strong feeling in the meeting about the complexity of the system would always be challenging, but that with collaboration across the system and with a preventative agenda running through the plans, improvement should become more visible.

Aberdeen City health and Social Care Partnership proposals on Mental health/ Learning disability services.

A discussion was held on a range of savings proposals currently out to consultation from Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership. This followed a letter of concern sent in December by the Psychiatric Medical Advisory Committee to the Aberdeen City Chief Officer. There was widespread concern about the potential impact of the proposed cuts on vulnerable patients and on wider system performance. It was agreed that Robert Lockhart would raise these concerns with the Chief Executive Team.

The Chair had excused himself from these discussions due to a potential conflict of interest as a voting member of the Aberdeen City IJB.

Financial Position Update.

Alex Stephen, Director of Finance, and Sarah Irvine, Deputy Director of Finance, updated the Forum on the current position. It was encouraging to hear that the position was improving and that we would seem to be on track to be within the agreed overspend of £45m. It was noted that the improving position of the IJBs and the focused monitoring of budgets was bringing financial benefits. It was also noted that maintaining the balance between financial stability and clinical governance was still closely monitored. ACF would still position itself to input into the impact assessment processes as previously agreed.

Updates from advisory committees.

Updates were given from all of the advisory structures and the contents of these will be available within the minutes of the meeting.

Following on from the previous discussions our GANMAC committee had further conversations regarding the consistent organisational approach to the zero-tolerance approach to violence and aggression. The Chair of ACF was able to feed back that this had been discussed at the NHS Grampian Board meeting and there was unanimous support for the implementation of the policy and discussion around the ability of staff to access the training available to assist with this.

Our GP subcommittee discussed the project to develop teaching centres for medical students in general practice and mental health. It was felt that further clarification of the governance and regulation of this project would be essential and that assurance has been provided that Central Legal Office advice is being pursued.

Of special note, Wendy Harper the Healthcare Support Worker in the major trauma unit at ARI (PT/OT) won HCSW of the year at Scottish Health Awards in Edinburgh in November. It was acknowledged by the Forum that our Healthcare Support Workers are a pivotal role in the provision of care to our citizens.

Public Health Report.

The report to the Forum was acknowledged and recognised. It was felt that the linkage between the preventive strategies and the Forum should be strengthened. The Director of Public Health and the Chair of ACF have met and will work together to further the preventative agenda and utilise the advisory committee structures to embed the preventative approach to move to a sustainable position through improved population health.

ACF and GAPF Developments.

This work is still well under way and the Chairs of GAPF and ACF both attended the Assurance Board in December 2025. We updated on the key priorities that have been agreed and that having tangible outputs would be essential to ensure progress. The 2 Sub-national planning delivery committees may wish to consider interfacing with ACFs in the same fashion that they are with APFs. A wide clinical representation is seen as essential from the Forum's point of view.

Overall, the Forum and committees will continue to provide clinical advice in the strategic operations of NHS Grampian and tailor their agendas to reflect the priorities of the delivery plan for 26/27.

Mark Burrell

Chair ACF

January 2026.