

NHS Highland Chief Executive's Update

March 2025



Fiona Davies,
Chief Executive NHS Highland

National reform and collaboration

At today's Board meeting we will consider a report which draws our attention to the national renewal and reform agenda and, in particular, the need for us to serve the whole population of Scotland, working across Board boundaries. Cross-board collaboration is not new, and indeed we already have existing agreements and pathways in place with NHS Grampian, NHS Western Isles and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, among other partners. However, the scale and pace of change will be increasing significantly, as we work to ensure the best outcomes for people nationally.

In some cases, this will be driven by the availability of key infrastructure. For example, we have capacity in our National Treatment Centre to offer elective surgery to people from other areas. In other services, increasing clinical specialisation and shortages in some areas of clinical expertise mean that people are more likely to have successful treatments if they attend a centre of excellence, where specialists are able to hone their skills because they are serving a larger population. We are seeing this play out in our own vascular services, where we are grateful for the temporary support of other boards and locums to keep our patients safe while a national solution is developed.

While acute hospitals will start to be thought of as part of a Scotland-wide network of centres for secondary care, it is important to see collaboration in the context of an equivalent shift to provide more services in the community. We know that people prefer to be cared for at home, or in a homely environment. We will need to use new technology and plan our workforce differently to deliver more treatments in people's homes or community locations, such as community hospitals, care homes or GP surgeries. We also need to make it easier for people to access services, such as at our successful MSK event, when we invited people awaiting physio to attend a leisure centre where a range of partners could offer support, advice and appointments on the spot.

It is no secret that NHS boards across Scotland, in common with other public bodies, need to find savings and efficiencies. But these changes are focused first and foremost on providing the best care for people, in the most appropriate setting. It may be helpful to think of the financial implications as a transfer of budgets, from acute to community, and from reactive treatments to prevention.

Vaccination

Having heard in January from Scottish Government that we could progress with some local flexibility to deliver vaccinations in the Highland Council area, we are now working on plans to implement this. An outline plan will be finalised at the end of this month, with a detailed roll-out to follow, including engagement with GPs and other stakeholders.

As the 2024-25 winter vaccination programme concludes, our vaccination teams are already planning for the spring 2025 covid vaccination programme, which will shortly begin.

Congratulations

Last year we had to pause 24/7 maternity cover at Broadford Hospital in Skye, due to a lack of staffing. With the support of a new Lead Midwife for the area, we have now successfully recruited two full time midwives, allowing the service to recommence and I am delighted that baby Jasper Latton was born in Broadford on 11 March. We are very proud of our community midwifery teams who enable women and families expecting a low-risk birth to experience a less clinical environment, often closer to home, and are working to improve population health and wellbeing so that more births can be classified as low risk.

Another success story is the Wade Centre in Kingussie. This care home recently received a very positive report from the Care Inspectorate, being rated as 'very good' at supporting people's wellbeing and for its staff team. I was struck by how the warm and friendly atmosphere of the home ran as a theme in the report, supporting both top-class, people-centered care and a motivated team.



Congratulations also go to the team at Lochardil Pharmacy who have been shortlisted for the Community Pharmacy Team of the Year Award at the Scottish Pharmacist Awards. This team were hugely resilient and dedicated to their customers and patients when a car ploughed into the front of the pharmacy in January. Luckily no one was hurt and despite significant damage the team was up and running using the car park and back

door the very next day. Best of luck to them at the Awards next month.

Fiona Davies, Chief Executive NHS Highland