

WORKFORCE

Strategy and Plan 2022-2025

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INTRODUCTION

In October 2022, NHS 24 published its Workforce Strategy and Plan for 2022-2025, outlining an ambitious agenda to transform the workforce to meet current and future demands. As part of this commitment, an annual refresh was promised. This document, "Developing and Delivering Our Strategy and Plan," has been fully updated and refreshed as part of the annual review.

Following the publication of the Year 2 Refresh of the Workforce Strategy and Plan in October 2023, we took the opportunity to review and refresh our plan and workforce requirements recognising that considerable change can happen in a year. We are in a different place in terms of what we know now with regards to Service Transformation and Digital Transformation and the implications they might have on the workforce.

As a recap, Year 1 achievements included:

- **Workforce Planning:** Robust processes for resource, operational, and strategic workforce planning were embedded.
- **Attrition Improvement:** An improvement plan was implemented, resulting in lower turnover and a higher stability index.
- **Health and Safety:** A comprehensive review of health and safety roles, responsibilities, and commitments was conducted and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set.

- **Corporate Induction Programme:** Launched and extended from a traditional one-day activity to cover the first 12 months of an employee's career.
- **Management Training:** Management Essentials Programme delivered to all people managers up to and including Band 7. Across 12 modules, were upskilled in new skills and capabilities including Employee Relations, Wellbeing, Team Development and Decision Making, providing them with key skills to confidently lead their teams and the organisation.
- **Staff Experience:** Staff Experience Groups and a Staff Experience Framework were implemented.
- **Values and Behaviours Framework:** A new framework was launched to guide organisational culture.

This plan sets out our highlights from Year 2 and what we aim to achieve in year 3, the final year of this Workforce Strategy. This refresh ensures that NHS 24 continues to align our workforce with our corporate objectives and future needs, considering national and local drivers. This document and associated action plan highlight the importance of continuous improvement, innovation, and collaboration to build a sustainable and inclusive workforce that can meet the evolving health and care needs of Scotland.

CORPORATE STRATEGY

In 2023, our Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 was published where we set out our three key strategic aims:

- deliver sustainable, high-quality services
- provide a workplace in which our people can thrive
- be a collaborative forward-thinking partner.

The Corporate Strategy is progressed via a Corporate Delivery Plan which considers confidence levels, risks, issues, and dependencies monitored across 6 key areas/portfolios of work:

- Digital Transformation Portfolio: This includes the procurement and implementation of new technology and infrastructure.
- Service Transformation Portfolio: Focuses on optimising the current delivery model and planning for future models.

- Workforce Portfolio: This includes initiatives to attract and retain staff, promote a digital culture, and support health and wellbeing.
- Collaboration: Involves joint efforts with other organisations like SAS and Public Health Scotland (PHS) to improve patient care and service delivery.
- Communications: Focuses on external and internal communication plans to support the delivery of services and engage with stakeholders.
- Compliance covering areas such as climate emergency, sustainability, equality, and human rights.

Further information on our Corporate Strategy can be found here: [corporate-strategy.pdf](#)



NATIONAL WORKFORCE STRATEGY

The National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Scotland ([National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Scotland \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)) outlines a comprehensive framework aimed at achieving a sustainable and skilled workforce that offers attractive career choices and values the contributions of all staff. This strategy is built on five key pillars: Plan, Attract, Train, Employ, and Nurture, which collectively support its overarching goals.



The strategy emphasises the importance of strategic workforce planning to ensure that the right number of staff with the right skills are in place to meet current and future service demands. It also focuses on attracting new talent to the health and social care sector through various recruitment initiatives and campaigns. Continuous training and development are highlighted to equip the workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge. Additionally, the strategy ensures that employment practices are supportive and inclusive, providing a positive working environment for all staff. Finally, it aims to retain staff by fostering a supportive culture, promoting well-being, and offering career development opportunities.

To support the National Strategy, our three-year workforce plan must respond to the following four questions:

1. What are your current service demands (including recovery requirements and projected Board population health needs), and the workforce requirements associated with these?
2. What is your current staffing profile?
3. What is the establishment gap between projected service demand and your current staffing profile?
4. What actions are you taking at a local level to support service growth and transformation, in line with your gap analysis?

Informed by these five pillars, NHS 24 developed their five key workforce objectives: Sustainable Workforce, Inclusive Culture, Enhanced Learning and Development, Effective Leadership and Management, Collaboration and Partnerships.



Key programmes of work, aligned to the five priorities and key workforce performance indicators, delivered in Year 2 include:

Sustainable Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Designed and delivered the online "Living the Values" assessment platform to ensure we hire right first time, and all new recruits are aligned to our Values and Behaviours Framework to support Service Transformation.Implemented a new Executive and Senior Manager Recruitment process.Met Call Handler recruitment target in February 2024 and maintained it. Clinical Supervisors have steadily increased over the past 12 months.Onboarded over 600 new employees in 12 months.Completed Year 1 of Workforce Data and Digital Transformation Workplan. Outputs included a culture and wellbeing dashboard; automated flexible working process; new start check in questionnaires; a case management system.Reduced accidents, no personal injury claims received and a positive increase in near misses/hazards reported.Exceeded target of 90% for completion rates for Health and Safety e-learning.
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Inclusive Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Implemented 'Our Culture Matters' programme and 'Our Wellbeing Matters' strategy.Implemented Culture and Wellbeing action plans for all directorates and progress monitored through Staff Experience Steering Group.Launched NHS 24 Wellbeing Action Plan, shaped by staff voice, which targets support under the key dimensions of Health, Environment, Social and Ways of Working.Commenced roll out of Culture and Values Workshops across the organisation, bringing our Values and Behaviours Framework to life.Designed and implemented Culture and Wellbeing Dashboard, metrics when taken together provide insight into culture and wellbeing trends, allowing for targeted interventions and identification of best practice.Implemented Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Workforce Action Plan.Increased number of staff identifying as minority ethnic and implemented action plan to support an inclusive and representative workforce.Launched People First ticketing system, over 3000 queries received and resolved. High satisfaction rates noted and exceeding agreed KPI's.Completed shift review Phase 2 to create team alignment.Implemented National Reduced Working Week from 37.5 hours to 37 hours from 01/04/2024.Launched a new Automated Flexible Working Application Form.Increased number of Confidential Contact roles across the organisation, providing support and signposting to staff who wish to raise a Whistleblowing or workplace concern.Re-introduced Staff Experience Groups in main centres, to promote working environments where everyone feels included, respected, and valued. These further support two-way feedback for Digital and Service Transformation.Introduced targeted interventions for iMatter which resulted in highest recorded Response Rate, Employee Engagement Index score, and Action Planning in NHS 24 history, promoting a supportive and inclusive work environment.
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Enhanced Learning and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Appraisal process and introduced phased window approach to align all activities to NHS Corporate Strategy. Created an appraisal hub to provide access to resources along with training for individual teams, as necessary. Benchmarked nationally and re-aligned Essential Learning, reducing completion time releasing capacity to value-add activities, leading to the highest recorded compliance levels. Completed Data and Digital Capability Survey in Workforce Directorate and action plan to address gaps currently in build phase. Will be rolled out to all corporate directorates over next 12 months to support Digital Transformation Programme. Launched supplementary learning platform LearnMore24 which has increased organisational learning hours by 24% through introduction of an additional 500 micro and self-directed learning opportunities and experiences. Introduced Internal Consultancy process, providing tailored interventions and solutions fostering continuous improvement and development at individual and team level. Supported significantly more external learning opportunities in 2023/2024. External Events and Development application approvals increased by 43% and Bursary application approvals increased by 90%. Supported managers and staff through refreshed resources and continued policy training alongside the implementation of lessons learned sessions.
Effective Leadership and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched Leadership Development Programme, incorporating 'Leading with Courage' and 'Leading for Impact,' strategically enhancing our leadership capabilities, equipping leaders with the skills to better support and motivate their teams, fostering a more positive work environment and a culture of psychological safety. This has been a critical preparatory programme of work which continues to ready our leaders to successfully lead transformation through the Digital and Service Transformation Programmes. Delivered Management Essentials Programme to all people managers up to and including Band 7. Across 12 modules, managers were upskilled in new skills and capabilities including Employee Relations, Wellbeing, Team Development and Decision Making, providing them with key skills to confidently lead their teams and the organisation. Introduced Mentor24 to foster skills development and career growth by connecting employees with seasoned mentors who provide valuable guidance and support. Expanded Talent Identification and Succession Planning to include Middle Managers alongside Senior and Executive levels. This enabled the development of robust succession plans and identified top talent for leadership opportunities. Reinvigorated the appraisal process by introducing appraisal champions and tailored support, resulting in increased engagement and participation.

Collaboration and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted collaboration with education institutions to raise awareness of NHS 24 and NHS Scotland as an employer. Partnered with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to target underrepresented groups through collaboration with work partners. Established partnerships with Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO), West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC) and Black Professionals Scotland. Collaborated with NES to engage with the Armed Forces Talent Programme, an NHS Scotland wide initiative. Established an NHS 24/SAS collaboration. Focuses include development of common roles; shared approaches to training and development particularly digital maturity; leadership growth; career maps for critical skillsets and proactive use and promotion of NHSS Careers Website hosted by NES to maximise its utility. Established a tripartite collaboration with NES and SAS to foster shared learning and explore joint approaches to a range of workforce challenges. These include learning and development, technology adoption, workforce planning, diversity and inclusion, and data sharing.
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DEVELOPING OUR THREE- YEAR PLAN

The underpinning workforce planning framework used is the Six Steps Methodology of Integrated Workforce Planning:

1. Understanding the organisation/directorate/unit and its environment (BASELINE)
2. Analysis of the current and potential workforce, considering factors such as attrition and current skills mix (SUPPLY)
3. Determination of the future workforce needs based on an analysis of demand assumptions (DEMAND)
4. Identification of workforce gaps against future needs and analyse future supply challenges (GAP ANALYSIS)
5. Developing actions to address shortages, surpluses, or skill mismatches (ACTION PLANS)
6. Evaluating actions to understand organisation/directorate/unit impact (DELIVER)

To improve our Workforce Planning for 2024 and beyond we have worked with our Executive Team, Senior Management Team, and Trade Unions and Professional Bodies to ensure everyone understands our approach to workforce planning. We held collaborative, facilitated meetings with each of our Directorates to ensure our financial plans, corporate plans and workforce plans were aligned. All Directors were required to complete a workforce plan questionnaire for their service(s) to give insight into any future changes to their resourcing/ workforce establishment requirements for year 3 of the plan and beyond. The questionnaire supported the Directors to assess their future workforce projections to support the delivery and the alignment with Corporate Strategy, Annual Development Plan, and financial plans (SPRA).





DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

Reforming services and reforming the way we work

The programme of reform, as set out by the Cabinet Secretary during the parliamentary debate in June 2024, seeks to deliver a health service that is fit for the 21st century. The Cabinet Secretary restated the vision for health and social care in Scotland - A Scotland where people live longer, healthier and fulfilling lives.

When it was established 76 years ago, NHS Scotland was visionary, bold, and radical. It transformed health services for millions of people and brought certainty and security, it made sure that services reached the same national standards for everyone, everywhere, according to need and not the ability to pay.

Scotland has changed significantly since then: we now live longer, medicine can do much more, technology is transforming the way we live, lifestyles and expectations have changed. We also know that renewed focus on improving the health of our population, addressing inequalities, prevention and early intervention is required to ensure that we can provide services that will be able to meet the forecasted demand.

Delivering sustainable, resilient, accessible, and efficient services for the population of Scotland can only be achieved by a significant change in the way we plan, organise, deliver, and fund services.

There are many interdependencies across the health and social care system, therefore many strands of transformation are required to run in parallel. Initial planning is in progress. Our NHS 24 Workforce Strategy and Plan will remain agile to quickly respond to key reform activities over the next 12 months.

Population Demographics

Demographic change is one of the most significant issues that will impact NHS 24 and its workforce. There is an urgent need to reshape the health and social care workforce to ensure it can meet the evolving health and social care needs of Scotland's population. Community health services and social care will at some point reach into all our lives. More than 800,000 people over the age of 18 are unpaid carers. In addition, competitive labour market forces will require NHS 24 to be innovative, flexible, and agile in its approach to workforce issues.

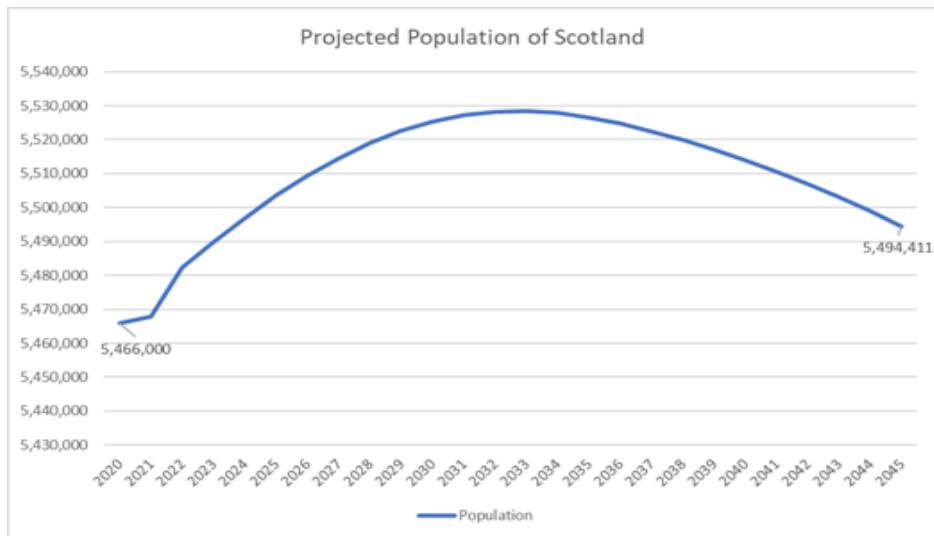
Health and Social Care in Scotland is also shifting away from hospital and residential care towards community-based services, supporting people to live in their own homes, where possible.

Population indicators are key in determining NHS 24's service profile and is vital for planning health services. By better understanding the profile of the population of Scotland and how they access services, we can more efficiently design and deliver effective patient care. Population change is driven by births, deaths, and migration (people moving into or out of Scotland).

On Census Day, 20 March 2022, the population of Scotland was estimated to be 5,436,600. This is the largest population ever recorded by Scotland's Census. The population grew by 141,200 (2.7%) since the previous census in 2011.

The population of Scotland is projected to continue increasing until around mid-2033, peaking at 5.53 million. It is then projected to fall by 0.6% to 5.49 million by mid-2045. The projections show Scotland's population falling below the mid-2020 baseline by around 2050. More people are projected to move to Scotland than leave each year. However, there are projected to be more deaths than births each year, and the gap between births and deaths is projected to widen. Over time, this will outweigh the growth from migration.



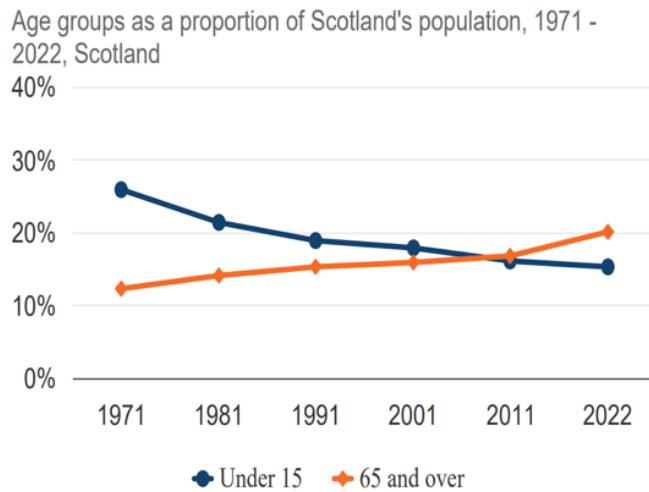


Life Expectancy

Scotland's population has the lowest life expectancy and widest socio-economic inequalities in health in Western Europe. In 2018-20, life expectancy at birth in Scotland was 76.8 years for males and 81.0 years for females.

Ageing Population

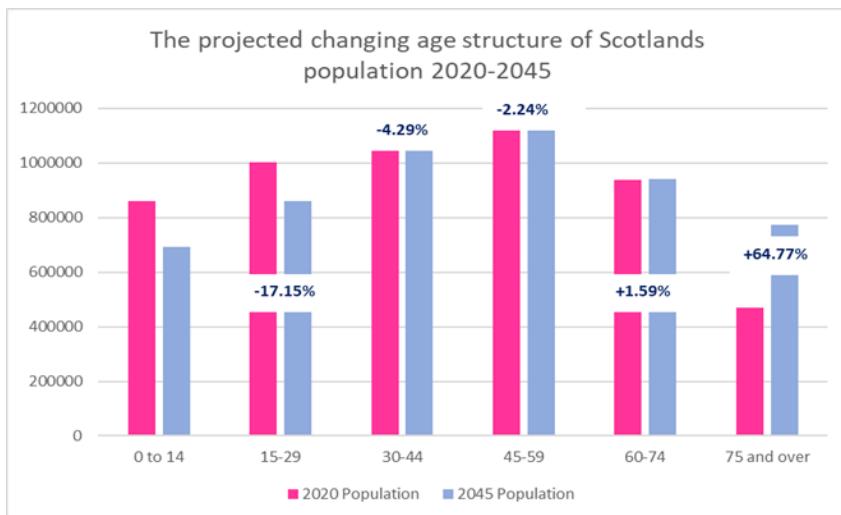
Scotland's population is ageing. There are more people in the older age groups than ever recorded in Scotland's Census. There are now over one million people aged 65 and over (1,091,000). This is over a quarter of a million higher than the number of people under 15 (832,300).



In Scotland's Census 2022 the 65 and older age group (65+) saw the largest change compared with the 2011 Census:

- 0 to 14 year old population decreased by 21,800 (down 2.5%)
- 15 to 64 year old population decreased by 37,700 (down 1.1%)
- 65+ population increased by 200,700 (up 22.5%)

The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to grow by nearly a third by mid-2045. The number of children is projected to fall by nearly a fifth. The population aged 16-64 is projected to fall slightly (-3%). With an increasingly aged population this brings with it a complexity of health and social care needs in the longer term e.g. mental health problems, obesity, dementia, coronary, diabetes and other long-term conditions.



Changes in projected population will impact on service demand and will inform workforce capacity and capability for the future. Our country's workforce continues to age with fewer people available to fill key jobs. It is important we understand the impacts of the increase in the population size of Scotland, coupled with the change in age profile, so we can prepare for the potential challenges on health and social care services in the future. With the significant increase in the number of people aged 65 and over, the demographic shift will likely increase the demand for health and social care services, particularly for chronic conditions and age-related illness.

Working Age Population

Having a sustainable and growing working age population is important. The working age population is projected to decrease slightly by mid-2045. In mid-2022, there were approximately 3.56 million working aged people in Scotland, making up 64.9% of the population. In mid-2045, the working age population is projected to be 3.55 million, making up 64.6%. The NHS is currently facing major workforce challenges, with approximately 3,102.9 WTE Nursing vacancies unfilled. The lack of a sufficient workforce, in number and mix of skills, can impact patient experience, service capacity, performance and productivity.

These factors highlight the need for the NHS to adapt its services and workforce planning to meet the changing needs of an aging population.

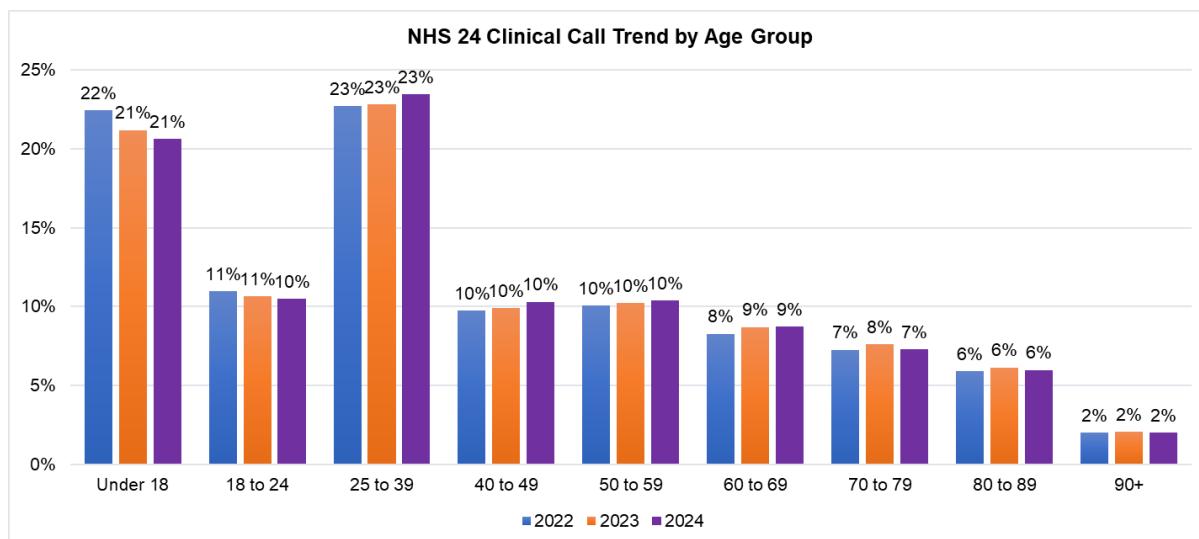


NHS Clinical Call Trend by Age Group

Life expectancy has increased significantly since the founding of the NHS, leading to more people living with chronic conditions such as cancer and dementia. This trend increases the demand for healthcare services, particularly for older adults who are more likely to suffer from multiple health issues. The increase in life expectancy means people will, on average, spend more years in poor health. This places additional strain on the NHS as older people are more likely to require long-term care and management of chronic conditions.

While we know many over 60s are more likely to contact their GP in the first instance, calls to the 111 service from this age group in 2023 accounted for approximately 25% of calls to the service (see below figure), which is the highest proportion of calls.

This trend remains consistent in 2024, albeit only 9 months data is presented due to this reporting running over a calendar not fiscal year.



The predicted increases in life expectancy are likely to have a continuing impact on the number and complexity of calls received by the service.

Evidence shows that the most digitally enabled age groups call the service the most often: aged 25-39 (23%) which is followed by those aged under 18 who require our service (21%).

Since its launch, NHS 24 has evolved from being a purely telephony-based service to increasingly adopting omni channel services to deliver virtual, digital-first health and social care services.

On our journey to offer digitally delivered and digitally enabled services, we have expanded our digital services including NHS Inform, and increased our range of self-help guides, information, and practical advice, which is available on our smartphone app, NHS 24 Online. NHS Inform has seen an increase in page views during 2023/24 compared to 2022/23. There were 90,190,634 users and 120,015,537 page views. That increased in 2023/24 to 103,750,008 users and 130,495,053 page views. That is an increase of 15% and 8.7%, respectively. We are still showing an expanded reach on NHS Inform pages, considerable work has been completed over the past couple of years to improve our findability on Google which may have contributed to the continued increase.

NHS Inform page views
86% increase in page views
since 2019/20

130,495,053

April 2023 -
March 2024

NHS Inform users
173% increase in visitors
since 2019/20

103,750,088

April 2023-
March 2024



NATIONAL DRIVERS

When developing the NHS 24 Workforce Strategy and Plan 2022-2025, we took cognisance of national Policy Drivers, some of those detailed below formed part of our last refresh and remain relevant, whilst others have been updated or are new. We continually monitor the national picture to understand any emerging workforce implications and update our plans accordingly.

NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026

The NHS Recovery Plan is a strategic initiative by the Scottish Government aimed at revitalising the NHS following the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond immediate recovery, the plan focuses on ensuring the long-term sustainability of the NHS by implementing reforms and innovations in healthcare delivery. Key aspects of the plan include:

- Increased investment over five years to enhance NHS capacity and deliver necessary reforms.
- Addressing the backlog in care that accumulated during the pandemic. This includes reducing waiting times for treatments and ensuring timely access to healthcare services.

- Increasing NHS capacity by at least 10% to meet ongoing healthcare needs.
- Measures to support staff wellbeing and recovery.

The Redesign of Urgent Care (RUC) is a crucial component of the NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026, the key goals for RUC in Scotland over the next year (2024-2025) include:

- Reducing A&E Attendances by promoting alternative pathways for urgent care to ensure patients receive the right care at the right place and time.
- Continuing to develop and refine Flow Navigation Centres (FNCs) to manage patient flow more effectively and ensure rapid access to appropriate care.
- Increasing the implementation and spread of mental health pathways to provide timely and effective support for individuals with mental health needs.
- Focusing on providing urgent care closer to patients' homes, reducing the need for hospital visits, and ensuring more convenient access to care.

Our Corporate Strategy 2023 - 2028 ensures our services now and in the future are aligned to the Recovery Plan and our Workforce Strategy outlines how we will continue to invest and grow our workforce to support delivery of these services and the role we will play as part of the recovery of the NHS in Scotland until 2026.

[NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026 \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)



National Care Service

The proposed establishment of a National Care Service (NCS) is taking shape over the lifespan of this workforce plan. Both the NCS and the NHS share the goal of improving health outcomes and ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality care. By working together, they can address both medical and social care needs more effectively. The service aims to address issues such as the "postcode lottery" of care, where the quality of care can vary significantly depending on where you live.

The timeline is as follows:

- 2022-2025: Establish foundational structures and begin transitioning responsibilities from local authorities to the NCS.
- 2026-2028: Further develop and expand the NCS, integrating more services and refining processes.

- 2029 onwards: Fully establish the NCS, ensuring all services are integrated and operating smoothly.

The characteristics of the future workforce of both the NHS and the NCS will be significantly impacted by the long-term structural pressures and efficiency savings required in the health service and social care. This will require agility, productivity, and efficiency in workforce planning at a national level.

National Care Service - Social care - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy: 2022-2026

NHS Scotland launched the 2022-2026 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy in August 2022, to achieve net-zero emissions by 2040 and becoming an environmentally and socially sustainable service, five years ahead of the rest of the UK. The Scottish Government expects Scotland's public bodies to lead by example in combating climate change. Net-zero means the amount of greenhouse gas emissions we put into the atmosphere and the amount we can take out will add up to zero.

In October 2023, NHS 24 developed our Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme and in October 2024 we produced and published our annual update report.

The Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme includes several key components:

- Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan: This plan sets out NHS 24's approach and actions in response to the NHS Scotland Climate Emergency Strategy.
- Sustainability Development Group (SDG) and Sustainability and Value Group (SVG): These groups have been established to support the programme and ensure that sustainability is embedded within NHS 24's ways of working.
- Annual Reporting: NHS 24 publishes an annual report on its climate emergency and sustainability efforts. This report provides updates on progress and outlines the actions being taken to reduce carbon emissions and improve sustainability.

(NHS-24-Annual-CESP-Report-v1.0-FINAL.pdf (appnhs24wp222b8656a3.blob.core.windows.net))

- Engagement and Awareness: NHS 24 encourages staff to engage with sustainability themes and share ideas for improvements. This includes initiatives such as sustainable travel, paper reduction, and energy efficiency.
- Collaboration and Partnership: NHS 24 works closely with other NHS boards and partners to integrate climate and sustainability considerations into the mainstream of NHS planning and management.

These efforts are part of a broader commitment to creating a more sustainable healthcare system that delivers better value care to the public while addressing the challenges posed by the climate emergency.

In a significant move to lessen carbon emissions, NHS 24 has seen a 65% reduction in train travel mileage and a 24% reduction in car mileage for the fiscal year 2023/24. NHS 24 has also made significant savings due to a reduction in energy consumption. By switching to LED lighting at its Norseman House contact centre in South Queensferry, NHS 24 has saved £50k and continues to monitor energy usage monthly for further savings. Similarly, the district heat pump system at Queens Quay in Clydebank provides renewable energy to the contact centre in Aurora House by extracting heat from the River Clyde, significantly reducing carbon emissions. Another notable green project is the development of a new Active Travel Policy. Based on findings from NHS 24's Active Travel survey and the Active and Sustainable Travel Strategy developed by Travel Know How Scotland, this policy aims to encourage sustainable ways to travel and reduce the carbon footprint of NHS 24 employees.

NHS Scotland climate emergency and sustainability strategy: 2022-2026 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

Delivering Value Based Health & Care - A Vision for Scotland

The vision for Value Based Health and Care was published by Scottish Government in December 2022 and an action plan published in September 2023. Delivering Value Based Health and Care will help ensure the long-term sustainability of NHS Scotland. Realistic Medicine encourages patients and their families to feel empowered to discuss their treatment options fully with healthcare professionals. It aims to create a more personalised approach to care through shared decision-making and meaningful conversations. The initiative also focuses on reducing harm and waste in healthcare by eliminating unnecessary investigations and treatments, thereby providing healthcare that truly adds value to patients.

The primary focus of our health and care system should be achieving the outcomes that matter to people focusing on their wellbeing, in both health, care and disease, at the lowest possible cost when building on people's strengths and targeting our interventions on what really makes a difference. This is the essence of Value Based Health & Care (VBH&C).

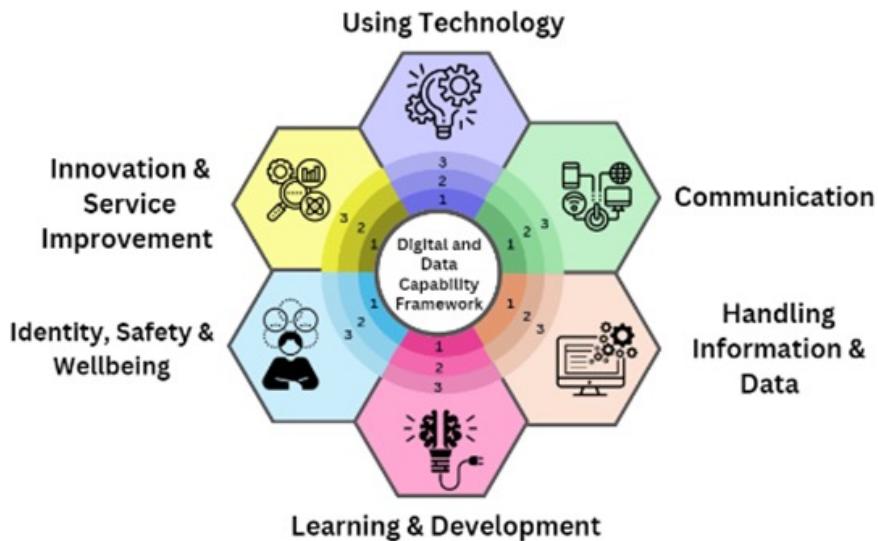
NHS 24 will support our workforce to practise Realistic Medicine to deliver VBH&C and ensure that appropriate skills and experience are available in the workforce to realise its ambitions.

[Delivering value based health and care: a vision for Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-Care/Value-Based-Health-and-Care)

Digital Health and Care Strategy

The Digital Health and Care Strategy for Scotland aims to enhance the care and wellbeing of people by leveraging digital technologies. This includes online consultations, digital health records, and remote monitoring. It aims to integrate health and social care services, ensuring that technology enables seamless interaction across different care settings. Initiatives to enhance digital skills among healthcare workers have been implemented.

The Digital Health and Care Strategy significantly impacts NHS 24 by enhancing its capabilities and expanding its role in providing digital health services. Overall, the Digital Health and Care Strategy aims to make NHS 24 a central hub for digital health services, improving access, efficiency, and the quality of care provided.



A data and digital framework (see diagram) was launched to support the strategy. The framework identifies the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are essential for the health and social care workforce of Scotland, clarifying the responsibilities at individual, team, and organisational level. The framework can be found here – [Digital and Data Capability Framework | Turas | Learn \(nhs.scot\)](https://nhs.turas.nhs.scot/).

NHS 24 are committed to ensuring that all employees and managers embrace new technology through utilising digital solutions and having a digital-first mindset.

[Digital health and care strategy - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-Care/Digital-Health-and-Care-Strategy)

Health and Social Care: Data Strategy for Scotland

Scotland's first Data Strategy for Health and Social Care, 'Greater access, better insight, improved outcomes: a strategy for data-driven care in the digital age' published in February 2023, set out the vision and ambitions for improving the use of health and social care data to deliver the best care possible for the people of Scotland.

NHS 24 want to attract, develop, support, and retain a workforce that is confident and competent in the use of data. This includes all staff having essential data skills that help us to better manage the information we all depend upon, and advanced data skills that help us to create more insight from data.

[Health and social care: data strategy - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-social-care/Health-and-social-care-data-strategy)

Health and social care - Planning with People: community engagement and participation guidance - updated 2024

Planning with People sets out the responsibilities NHS boards, local authorities, and Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) have to community engagement when health and social care services are being planned, or when changes to services are being considered and supports them to involve people meaningfully. NHS Boards and IJBs have a statutory duty to involve people and communities in the planning and development of care services, and in decisions that will significantly affect how services are run. 'Planning with People' sets out how members of the public can expect to be engaged by NHS Boards, Integration Joint Boards and Local Authorities.

For NHS 24, this guidance means that there is a clear framework to follow for engaging with the community when planning or making changes to health and social care services. It reinforces the statutory duties for engagement and promotes consistency, culture change, and true collaboration. By involving people and communities in the planning process, NHS 24 can ensure that services are person-centered, delivered in the right place, at the right time, and meet the needs of the population.

[Health and social care - Planning with People: community engagement and participation guidance - updated 2024 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-social-care/Planning-with-People-community-engagement-and-participation-guidance-updated-2024)

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The Scottish Government intend to introduce a new legal duty to improve how the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) operates in Scotland, with a focus on inclusive communication and an aim to implement by May 2025.

This means that NHS 24 must ensure that all communications are accessible to individuals with various needs, including those with disabilities and those who speak different languages. We will need to invest in training our staff on inclusive communication practices. This includes understanding the diverse needs of the population and how to effectively communicate with everyone.

[The Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\) | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://equalityhumanrights.com/public-sector-equality-duty-psed)



Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019

The Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 sets out the requirements for safe staffing across both health and social care services. The implementation was delayed by the pandemic; however, it came into force from April 2024. The Act does not prescribe specific staffing levels but enables every health board and care provider to determine their own workforce plan based on need. Safe staffing requirements are essential to ensure that all healthcare providers have the appropriate number of qualified staff to deliver safe, effective, and person-centred care.

Considerable progress has been achieved, to ensure compliance with all outstanding elements and it is anticipated that NHS 24 will achieve a full suite of measures by end April 2025. We believe we can evidence the 'Time to Lead' element through their day-to-day role, for example call reviews, 1:1s, levelling and providing real-time clinical supervision. The transforming roles work will help us determine the percentage of time we wish them to have direct intervention.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) are monitoring the compliance of Health Boards carrying out their duties under the Act. NHS 24 are audited quarterly, and we have provided assurance that we fulfil our safe staffing requirements across our 24/7 service.

[Health and Care \(Staffing\) \(Scotland\) Act 2019: overview - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-Care/Health-and-Care-Staffing-Act-2019/Overview)

Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Scotland – Delivery Plan 2023-2025

The Strategy sets out Scottish Government's long-term commitment to improve the mental health and wellbeing of everyone in Scotland. The vision is a Scotland, free from stigma and inequality, where everyone fulfils their right to achieve the best mental health and wellbeing possible. It recognises that a highly effective mental health system must address all levels of need. This ranges from maintaining good mental wellbeing, to the support available in communities, to recognising and responding to the many underlying social determinants, circumstances and inequalities that can affect people's mental health and wellbeing.

NHS 24 need to recruit and retain staff to provide mental health services to the people of Scotland including Breathing Space, a confidential listening service, and a Mental Health Hub to offer advice and guidance. We also work with Scottish Government on the continued development of Mind to Mind.

There is an overarching Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 which sets out Scottish Government's ten-year vision and approach to mental health.

[Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-Care/Mental-Health-Strategy-2017-2027/Overview)

For our NHS 24 workforce we envisage a workplace where wellbeing extends beyond health and encompasses ways of working, environment and social interactions and creates a sense of belonging.

[Mental health and wellbeing strategy: delivery plan 2023-2025 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-Care/Mental-health-and-wellbeing-strategy-delivery-plan-2023-2025/Overview)

Improving Wellbeing and Workplace Cultures Framework and Action plan

Scottish Government published in July 2024, the Improving Wellbeing and Workplace Cultures Framework (IWWC), which sets out a vision to enhance working cultures across our health, social care, and social work workforce, through programmes of work at a national level that focus on the pillars of wellbeing, leadership, and equality.

In 2023, NHS 24 launched 'Our Culture Matters' Programme 2023-2025 and 'Our Wellbeing Matters' Strategy. As part of this year's refresh activities, both have been reviewed and re-aligned where required, to the new IWWC framework.

An overarching component of our Workforce Strategy and Plan has and continues to be our Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan. Delivery of the Action Plan has provided solid foundations in which to build more bespoke activities. Over the next year we will scope and design a programme aimed at empowering BME staff to achieve success in the senior leadership space.

[Improving Wellbeing and Working Cultures \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health-and-Care/Improving-Wellbeing-and-Working-Cultures-Overview)

Anchor Institution

NHS 24 is an Anchor Institution. Anchor institutions are large organisations whose long-term sustainability is tied to the well-being of the populations they serve. Development of an Anchors Strategic Plan is a requirement of the Corporate Delivery Planning process and as such the actions of the Anchor Strategic Plan are embedded into rolling annual deliverables and activities and aligned to national recovery priorities for NHS Scotland. Anchor institutions are required to:

- maximise local, progressive procurement of goods and services.
- provide fair work opportunities for new employment and for existing staff.
- use and/or dispose of your land and assets for the benefit of the local community and local economy.

Our Anchor Strategic Plan activities emphasise the importance of partnership working, workforce development, procurement, and environmental impact. We will offer secure and interesting employment opportunities across our communities and engage with local businesses to support local economic development.

Our Workforce Strategy includes commitments in fulfilling the role of Anchor Institution. NHS 24 has actively strengthened its partnership working in collaboration with others, with the aim to support and build a more diverse workforce offering career and employment opportunities. Collaborative work includes:

- Targeted events across the year for schools, universities, and further education institutions to raise awareness of NHS 24 and NHS Scotland as an employer and potential career pathways in place.
- Working with Job Centre to target underrepresented groups through collaboration with work partners and individuals accessing employment opportunities.
- Work with ethnic minority partners including Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO), West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC) and Black Professionals Scotland to diversify our workforce.
- Fully engaged with the Armed Forces Talent Programme, which is an NHS Scotland wide recruitment initiative for the Armed Forces community.

The Anchor Strategic Plan activities include specific actions such as widening access to NHS jobs for those furthest from the labour market, which can help increase incomes for families, reduce child poverty, and support career pathways into NHS roles for people who might not have previously considered the NHS as a source of employment.

Addressing Racism

The Programme for Government 2024-25 emphasises a strong commitment to embedding anti-racism across the public sector. For NHS Scotland, this means recognising that racism exists within NHS and social care services, impacting minority ethnic communities' health outcomes. NHS 24 will actively stand against racism by challenging and changing discriminatory policies, practices, beliefs, and behaviours to create a more inclusive and fair society. All 22 NHS Health Boards must develop and deliver anti-racism plans, with progress monitored and boards held accountable for improving patient and staff experiences and outcomes.

[Anti-racism: Cabinet Secretary's statement - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/anti-racism-cabinet-secretary-s-statement)



Pension Changes

The NHS Pension Scheme (Scotland) (NHSPS[S]) continues to be an integral part of the NHS Scotland remuneration package and offers significant value in retirement to NHS Scotland staff. The scheme now offers staff more options at the end of their career, so that they can partially retire or return to work seamlessly and continue building pension after retirement.

NHS 24 is committed to closely monitoring retirement trends to assess the ongoing impact of the flexible retirement options available to our staff. Currently, individuals have the choice to pursue permanent retirement, retire and subsequently return to work, or to initiate a pension drawdown, provided they agree to a reduction in hours or earnings. While it was initially anticipated that the introduction of these flexible options would lead to a marked increase in retirement figures, the data over the past three years indicate that the rates of retirement have remained relatively stable. We will continue to evaluate this situation to ensure that our workforce plans continue to reflect retirement trends.

[NHS | SPPA \(pensions.gov.scot\)](https://www.pensions.gov.scot)

Reduced Working Week

This national initiative is designed to promote a better work-life balance for our staff while ensuring minimal impact on service delivery. We have already made good progress in the first iteration of this reduction from 37.5 hours per week to 37 hours per week from 01/04/2024. The next steps will focus on achieving a 36-hour working week for our full-time staff from 01/04/2026. We aim to deliver this by working in close partnership with our Trade Unions and Professional Bodies, ensuring that all changes are made collaboratively and with the best interests of our workforce in mind. This approach will support our corporate aim to improve wellbeing and work/life balance for our people.

[Changes to the Agenda for Change Handbook: Reduction of the working week to 37 hours and updates to Section 15 and Section 27 \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://scot.nhs.uk)



LOCAL DRIVERS

From the Corporate Plan 2023-2028 the following actions have direct workforce implications:

- Increase the potential of and optimise inbound decision support led pathways that Call Handlers can safely and effectively endpoint to improve capacity and outcomes e.g. **Advise and Refer** protocols.
- Develop appropriate roles/skillsets to meet the requirements of future clinical/service models - **The Transforming Roles** workstream is tasked with considering current roles within the service, defining what future needs are and how these fit against professional frameworks for both registered and non-registered staff. With an overall aim of supporting a structure that will allow staff the opportunity to develop and progress within the organisation.
- Implement recommendations from **strategic review of recruitment** to hire right first time and curb attrition.
- Promote a **digital culture** where all employees and managers embrace new technology through workforce digital solutions and a digital-first mindset.
- Develop **Leadership Capacity** through the delivery of our 'Management Essentials Programme' to frontline leaders, 'Leading with Courage' to middle leaders and 'Leading for Impact' to senior leaders.
- Implement the strategic actions outlined in '**Our Wellbeing Matters**' Strategy and Action Plan.
- Enable a **values led culture** by developing and implementing directorate level Culture and Wellbeing Action Plans and delivering values and behaviours workshops for all NHS 24 staff.
- Ensure **attendance management** and **case management** support is available for all leaders and managers.

As of 30 Sept 2024, all workforce actions are reporting a progress status of green, and high confidence levels of deliverability.

A copy of our Corporate Plan can be found [**here**](#):



Service Optimisation Programme

Concurrently, the Service Optimisation programme will deliver improvements to increase capacity and support our workforce across the following areas:

- **Consistent, Efficient & Effective Triage**

This workstream aims to reduce variation in triage and call outcomes, to improve efficiency and effectiveness in care outcomes. The focus is on coaching and levelling, which is led by the SCN Improvement Leads in each centre.

'Right Care Right Place' training is also being delivered, to support the coaching and levelling. This supports staff experience and morale, in line with the organisational value to grow and support staff.

A review of end points within the decision support tool has been completed with a proposal to reduce from 78 to 25. Additionally, interim end points have been removed and replaced with recommended outcomes. An evaluation will be undertaken to compare recommended outcomes with final outcomes to enable further Advise and Refer opportunities.

- **Clinical Advice Line**

This enhances the current model for Call Handlers to access clinical supervision, ensuring equitable and timely support. It is a national 'test of change' and continues to be refined and developed, to ensure a streamlined approach and reduction in variation of outcomes.

- **Operational Supervision Model**

The supervision model which includes a combination of remote and face to face support, is under review to ensure it is delivered consistently and staff feel supported in their roles. As well as improving the patient experience, the aim is to provide professional development for band 6 nurses and improve retention.

- **IVR & Operational Optimisation**

The IVR and routing strategy has been reviewed and improvements identified which ensure the patient experience is as seamless as possible, callers are correctly routed or re-directed to the best place of care, whilst also reducing the time it takes patients to progress through the IVR and the wait time for calls to be answered.

Service Transformation

The Service Transformation Programme Board STPB has accountability for the oversight and coordination of all improvement, redesign, and transformation of all public facing NHS 24 services. This will include ensuring effective utilisation of tools made available through **Digital Transformation** and supporting an organisational transition to an omnichannel service. The Service Transformation Programme STP will ensure that there is appropriate Clinical and Operational governance and ownership; that NHS 24 delivers sustainable high-quality services that meet assessed needs; and that there is alignment with other strategic portfolios and Corporate Communications.

This will include:

- **Transforming Roles**

The future clinical model for delivering remote triage will be defined, ensuring the patient is provided with tailored, self-care advice or signposted or referred, to receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.

Workforce requirements to deliver the clinical model will be defined, with the appropriate roles and skillset to optimise safety, efficiency, and person centredness, to meet current and future needs. The roles of registrants and non-registrants will be underpinned by defined competencies and align to professional frameworks. Competencies and frameworks will be reviewed across the bandings, from band 2 to 6, with the potential to re-introduce band 5 nursing posts. This will create career pathways and give opportunities for our staff's growth and development. It will also give a strong, clinical identity to the 'NHS 24 nurse'.

- **Decision Support Review**

The number of calls managed by Call Handlers, without an intervention from a clinical supervisor, has been steadily rising over the past year, as the 'Advise and Refer' protocols have evolved and developed. The aim of reviewing the decision support functionality in our Customer Relationship Management CRM system, is to increase the number of pathways where Call Handlers can safely and effectively, reach an endpoint, without mandatory clinical supervision. It is anticipated that call time will reduce, and clinical capacity will increase, improving the overall patient experience. Our staff will be involved in the development of pathways and supported to implement new ways of working.



Digital Transformation

As a lead organisation in digital healthcare, we are rolling out a large-scale programme of work, the '**Digital Transformation Programme**' which will enable a more agile, connected, accessible and collaborative omnichannel environment. An omnichannel model means our patients and partners will have the choice to access our services via telephone, video, app, chatbot, webchat and voice assisted technology. More importantly, it means these different channels will be connected and it will be possible to switch between them to get to the right care without having to repeat information or restart.

The Digital Transformation Programme is critical to delivering the improvements required, to maximise the potential of the Service Optimisation Programme. Our frontline workforce needs to be prepared not only for a new Contact Centre/Customer Relationship Management (CC/CRM) system, the shift to a 'digital first' approach, requires teams to be digitally enabled in the wider sense.

The ambition is to make services which NHS 24 provide easier to access for patients and partners. To do this, our staff need a system which is user friendly and allows them to route calls and complete triage, efficiently and effectively, whilst maintaining patient safety.

What does this mean for our service?

- Enhanced decision support systems
- An agile, technology-enabled workforce with increased resilience and the ability to scale to meet demand
- Data driven decision making and data-sharing between partners
- An improved technical architecture and integration with partner systems
- Improved resilience and the digitisation of manual processes

The programme focus is on the procurement and implementation of our next generation technology infrastructure. Projects within the programme will be delivered throughout 2025 and include:

- Commercial – all procurement activities
- CC/CRM implementation
- Integrated decision support tool implementation
- Delivery of CC/CRM Training and other identified dependent training needs
- Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence implementation
- Managed Services – bringing our ICT service desk in-house and conducting an ICT infrastructure review

Our managers and frontline staff will be involved in the discovery and design phases of the new CC/CRM. They will have opportunities to view developments and provide feedback, through the established Key Reference and Staff Engagement Groups. Along with our colleagues in the Practice Education team, we will build on the Learning Needs Assessment to develop a comprehensive training programme, ensuring that frontline staff are fully trained and prepared to use the new CC/CRM system by the summer of 2025.

The workforce implications continue to be scoped as a critical workstream in all projects and will involve new roles, job design, upskilling our staff, training and new ways of working e. g., identify opportunities to enhance and evolve our services through remote devices, home monitoring and artificial intelligence to support care closer to home and self-management of care.

Internally when the programme is delivered, it will reduce manual processes and remove paper-based systems to improve workflow and reduce repetition waste. Technology will also support greater opportunity for hybrid and remote working across various locations, including homeworking, to provide greater flexibility and contribute to sustainability.

To support the transformation programmes, we are undertaking several broader initiatives including:

- **Increasing the Clinical Resource**

In conjunction with improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the clinical supervision model, there is a strong focus on increasing the clinical resource to the target of 185 WTE. Supported by our colleagues in recruitment, opportunities are sought to attract clinicians by offering a range of contractual hours including some full-time contracts, re introducing a local element into the process and conducting interviews face to face.

- **Estates Sustainability Plan**

Opportunities to maximise the capacity of our estate, involves re-commencing recruitment of nurses into our local centres, which had been paused since before the pandemic. A test of change is underway recruiting into the Inverness centre, using a hybrid model, which provides the opportunity for some clinical staff to split their contractual working week between being on site, with working from home. This will be evaluated, to determine if it is possible to progress the initiative into other local centres and potentially to remote areas too.

- **New Intranet**

In April 2024, a new NHS 24 intranet was delivered through Microsoft SharePoint. This user-friendly platform is designed to enhance information access and collaboration among staff, giving teams the ability to publish their own content in a structured and convenient format. News, policies, and processes as well as key team resources, are all available in one place.

Communications and Engagement colleagues sit within each project to capture key updates which are then communicated to staff through our dedicated **Digital Transformation** Intranet page as well as our digital newsletter 'Team Talk,' with Staff Experience Groups and externally to partners too.



Staff Engagement / Culture & Wellbeing Action Plans

The Staff Engagement Group meetings have been welcomed across the centres. They are underpinned by a continuous improvement process, with development activity and support. These groups are playing a vital role, in engaging our frontline teams with the transformation programmes.

Our directorate Culture and Wellbeing Action Plans and the NHS 24 Values and Behaviours Framework, support us to maintain a thriving workplace, with a fair work culture, where staff feel valued. The Values and Behaviour sessions will continue to be rolled out across the centres.

At an individual level, the person centres approach continues, where staff are continually developed using the appraisal process to agree clear objectives and they are given time to complete essential Continuous Professional Development CPD. Their feedback is sought through various surveys, check in questionnaires for new starts and iMatter. The role of our Wellbeing Managers is key to supporting managers to promote staff attendance. We continue to support staff when they are absent and when appropriate, and manage absence in accordance with Once for Scotland Policy.

The Management Essentials Programme has been rolled out and band 7 and 8 managers are now completing the Leading for Impact or Leading with Courage Leadership Development Programme. The skills learnt or consolidated will be essential to support the organisation and our teams, to implement the changes in our transformation programmes. It also prepares managers for using the Service Delivery Empowerment Framework.

Partnership Working

NHS 24 is committed to building upon and fostering strong, collaborative relationships with our Trade Unions and Professional Bodies colleagues that has been established in the first two years of our strategy. We recognise that effective partnership working is crucial to creating a positive and productive workplace. By engaging in open dialogue and mutual respect, we aim to address the needs and concerns of our workforce, ensuring fair and equitable treatment for all employees. Our collaborative approach with Trade Unions and Professional Bodies, colleagues through both Area Partnership Forums and Regional Partnership Forums, help us to navigate challenges, implement best practices, and drive continuous improvement in our HR policies and practices. Together, we strive to build a supportive and inclusive work environment that benefits everyone.

A significant area of collaboration this coming year will be on the implementation and engagement exercise ensuring the launch, engagement, and training on the new suite of Once for Scotland policies is done in Partnership.

Resourcing and Flexible Working

Front line staff are provided with a choice of weekly contractual hours and have visibility of the vacant rotas, at the recruitment stage, however they also can request changes to their contractual hours, their rota, and their location of work through the Flexible Working Policy. These are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, in line with the legislation, as per the NHS Once for Scotland policy.

The number of requests has increased, and the review process involves several teams, which generates significant work. Service Delivery will be involved in a review of the internal process, to ensure it is as efficient and effective as possible. This will ensure our staff are supported through the process and receive a timely response to their request.

Workforce Planning and Establishment Control

NHS 24 is committed to managing resources effectively and efficiently. Through effective strategic resource management explicitly linked to the Corporate and Financial Planning processes we aim to ensure that we have the right skills developed, managed, and deployed to where we need them, when we need them to meet our corporate and workforce objectives today and in the future through robust Workforce Planning. Workforce Planning is a strategic process which translates corporate objectives into forecasted resources and skills required to support the acquisition and/or development of resource and skill to be available where and when they are required by NHS 24.

Workforce Planning focusses on current resource headcount and operational plans (establishment control, monthly movement meetings, manager dashboards) for the budget year ahead. Strategic Workforce Planning looks towards a three-to-five-year time horizon. It is a continual process that is owned by the whole organisation but enabled by the Workforce Directorate.

The Strategic Workforce Planning Group exists to provide oversight and scrutiny of vacancy management and changes to posts/teams/structures on behalf of the Executive Management Team. They ensure the establishment control process is followed when making changes to posts, budgeted whole time equivalents (WTE), bands attached to posts and job purpose (including reporting lines, job title and type of work undertaken). They also ensure there is an integrated approach to workforce planning across the Board, scrutinising and identifying the workforce implications of strategic and operational plans, internal and external learning and training and new programmes of work.

Collaborative Working

NHS 24 and the SAS are committed to transforming urgent and unscheduled care across Scotland through collaborative efforts, supported by sustainable workforce models and innovative digital solutions. Together, we strive to deliver seamless, person-centred services, building on a long-standing tradition of partnership and joint initiatives. The NHS 24/SAS Joint Collaboration Board (JCB) plays a crucial role in overseeing progress across key strategic workstreams, with workforce development being a central focus.

In Phase 1, we concentrated on identifying opportunities for joint working, including the development of common roles and career pathways. This phase also addressed the exploration of shared approaches to training and development, with particular emphasis on key areas such as digital maturity, common roles, and leadership growth. Specific actions include promoting digital resources for preparing individuals for careers in health and social care, developed by the NHS Scotland Academy, publishing career maps for critical skillsets, and reviewing the NHSS Careers Website hosted by NES to maximise its utility. These initiatives will continue to progress as we move into Phase 2.

Phase 2 brings a renewed focus on clinical workforce development, prioritising a review of advanced practice skillsets to identify collaboration opportunities across the four pillars of advanced practice. These efforts aim to demonstrate added value for both organisations, patients, and the wider healthcare system. The commitment to exploring joint roles, career frameworks, and career pathways remains, with a mapping exercise planned to better understand shared workforce data, current roles, skill mixes, education, and training.

NHS 24 has also established a tripartite collaboration with NES and SAS to foster shared learning and explore joint approaches to a range of workforce challenges. These include learning and development, technology adoption, workforce planning, diversity and inclusion, and data sharing. One example is the review of current training and development approaches to identify shared areas of interest, with a particular focus on leveraging simulation tools, artificial intelligence, and extended reality to enhance outcomes.

Financial Context

The financial outlook for public sector services remains extremely challenging in the short to medium term. This creates pressure on Scotland's public sector to reduce expenditure while ensuring long-term sustainable public services. It is anticipated that the annual efficiencies target shall continue at higher than historic levels, with cost savings of 3%+ being required recurrently year on year to breakeven.

Planned work around service and digital redesign are expected to provide opportunities to reduce costs in areas such as technology infrastructure, telephony services, and estates utilisation, as well as delivering a range of non-financial benefits. However, a look ahead would suggest that the organisation cannot rely on non-pay efficiencies alone to meet its financial obligations with strict establishment control processes in place to ensure that every vacant post is reviewed to understand the risks and opportunities presented when they arise.

NHS 24 will continue to recruit to clinical posts to support the redesign of urgent care after the success of reaching the Call Handler recruitment target. This shall help improve the call performance going forward. Close working with Scottish Government's Mental Health Portfolio has resulted in additional baseline funding for the Mental Health Hub providing financial security for posts that the organisation had filled on a permanent basis in anticipation of the funds being made recurring.

DIRECTORATE DRIVERS



NHS 24 has seven directorates and a communications function, each responsible for various aspects of the organisation's operations.

Service Delivery Directorate

Service Delivery is the patient facing directorate of NHS 24 that covers the full range of services offered to Scotland including - Unscheduled Care Service (111), Scottish Emergency Dental Services, Health Information Services (NHS Inform), as well as our Mental Health Services – Mental Health Hub, Breathing Space and NHS Living Life. We operate a multi-disciplinary team approach to ensure the public get access to the most appropriate care.

• 111 Service

To continue to deliver a high quality, sustainable service for patients and an optimal environment for our staff to deliver patient care, several workforce initiatives are being scoped and developed over the coming year. These are aligned with other strategic portfolios, to inform and make best use of our expertise, technology, and resources. The **Service Transformation** and Service Optimisation Programmes, in conjunction with the **Digital Transformation**, support the redesign of the service, making it fit for our patients, staff and partners, in the future. Our staff are fundamental to making this happen, both giving them the tools to deliver the service, as well as providing the workplace culture to support change.

• Mental Health Services

We continue to see an increase in demand for mental health services across Scotland and there is recognition of the potential to diversify routes of access to offer not only telephony but digital provisions too. In line with our strategic ambition to help people access the right care at the right place, we will continue to strengthen our suite of mental health services. This will include the 111 Mental Health Hub, Breathing Space, Living Life and the digital mental health offerings through Surviving Suicidal Thoughts, Mind to Mind, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy CBT tools and self-help guides.

Through collaborative work with Police Scotland, SAS, the Health and Social Care Helpline and the Forensic Medical Examination (FME) service we have been able to offer care to around 140,000 people a year. The collaboration with

Police Scotland and SAS was established to improve the care pathway for people contacting those services in mental health distress.

The Police Scotland pathway allows Police Scotland Service Agents access to designated mental health professionals within NHS 24 and, working closely with locality-based care and support services, to provide an appropriate and enhanced mental health triage and assessment of need service.

The SAS pathway allows SAS call agents to signpost relevant callers to the 111 Mental Health Hub once the assessment is complete. The pathway also allows for the SAS crew on the ground and with the patient to contact the Mental Health Hub to seek advice or have the patient speak with a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) directly. Phase 2 of the pathway was implemented in December 2023 enabling SAS clinicians in the Contact Centre to warm transfer calls to 111 Mental Health Hub for further mental health assessment where transportation of patients to hospital is not required.

The (FME) line provides a 24-hour, year-round digital and telephony-based service for people aged 16 and over who have experienced rape or other sexual assault, allowing them to arrange a forensic medical examination outside a police setting.

A review of NHS 24's mental health services is underway. The ambition is to integrate all mental health services under a single management and unified governance structure. It will identify opportunities for collaborative working, sharing of training and education, and enhanced digital access.

- **Dental and pharmacy**

Our pharmacists continue to deliver a high quality and sustainable service to our patient's. A new approach has been introduced to stream medicines calls more effectively, directly to our pharmacist advisors. This ensures patients can more quickly access the medicines advice and support they need.

There continues to be a high volume of calls for medicines advice and efforts continue to recruit pharmacy resource to meet demand. A recent review has reshaped the pharmacy operating model which is currently being finalised. Consideration is being given to matching it to an approach similar to the successful dental operating model.

Our dental team continue to see high demand levels for their services, and challenges persist post-pandemic, as access to primary care dentistry is inconsistent in many areas across Scotland. Recruitment of key skill sets into the dental team remains a high priority as well as providing expertise into the **Service Transformation** Programme.



Nursing and Care Directorate

Nursing and Care directorate provides professional clinical leadership, including Allied Health Professionals (AHP) into the design, development, and delivery of NHS 24 telehealth and telecare services.

It also supports robust organisational Clinical and Care Governance and Patient Safety systems. An ongoing review of the Nursing and Care Directorate is in progress. This review will ensure the Directorate is 'fit for purpose' and able to deliver its functions and outcomes effectively and efficiently against agreed objectives and the NHS 24 Clinical Roadmap. It will also consider any development of additional/ new services within NHS 24 as this will potentially increase public protection referrals.

The Practice Education function within Nursing and Care has also undergone an independent external review to inform an evidence based refocusing of the Practice Education function. A business case is in progress with an associated implementation plan which will ensure the team is able to provide key elements of its function including induction training and continuous learning and development. The public protection function within Nursing and Care will commence a redesign phase from October 2024 which will focus on the skill set and how its operational processes are refined to reduce unnecessary manual administration and ensure capacity can meet current and future demand. This will include role development for administrative staff to transition to Healthcare Support Workers to increase clinical capacity and efficiency. There is also an opportunity to digitalise administrative processes, which will impact positively on efficiency and productivity.

Our Digital and Service Transformation workstreams will establish the role of all clinical staff within the directorate through focus on transforming roles. This will ensure that all clinical skills are used to maximum impact with a focus on patient safety and improving the patient journey. Time will be taken to understand how advanced clinical decision-making skills can be used effectively and at optimum times.

The (AHP) Workplan was approved in August 2023 and continues to focus on the key themes of clinical developments, workforce and education and system-wide pathways, aligned to organisational objectives.

Alongside contributions to wider NHS 24 and national AHP work, examples of current projects include continuing developments to the MSK information on NHS Inform, working with national leads to improve MSK pathways, reviewing MSK absence and pathways for NHS 24 staff, scoping the potential role of occupational therapy in the mental health hub, and continuing to provide project -based clinical placements for NHS 24 staff. Wider AHP roles in the organisation are being considered as part of the collaboration work with the SAS and the NHS 24 Transforming Roles workstream.

Medical Directorate

Medical Directorate provides senior clinical leadership and expertise to the full range of NHS 24 services including Unscheduled Care (111), Scottish Emergency Dental Service, Health Information, Breathing Space and Living Life services.



The Medical Directorate is focussed on developing NHS 24 as a national leader in the delivery of urgent and unscheduled care. Our clinicians support collaboration with partner territorial Boards, lead the clinical workstream of the NHS 24 – SAS collaboration and contribute to national groups co-ordinated by the Centre for Sustainable Delivery. We are integrally involved in organisational transformation through both the Digital and Service Transformation Programmes. Current digital clinical expertise and experience are contributing to developing and implementing the organisational data strategy and digital clinical safety.

Ensuring resilient internal Primary Care expertise will ensure our ability to influence national primary care groups and contribute to robust organisational clinical governance.

In undertaking the recent Mental Health review, the directorate will support improved integration of NHS 24 mental health services and provide national leadership in Digital Mental Health through projects such as Mind to Mind and Surviving Suicidal Thoughts.

Through partnership and collaboration with Public Health Scotland, we will support delivery of Proactive and Preventative care and ensure clinical care delivery across the organisation is aligned to our Climate Emergency and Sustainability action plan.

Workforce Directorate

This directorate is dedicated to creating a supportive and engaging work environment where every employee can thrive and comprises of three teams: People Services, Resourcing and Planning and Organisational Development, Leadership and Learning (ODLL). The Workforce Directorate will continue to implement the Workforce Strategy and Plan 2022-2025, and work will commence on our new strategy to be published in October 2025. We have made substantial progress in terms of delivery of the Workforce Strategy and Plan 2022-2025. Current Workforce Strategy (before Year 3 refresh) is 81.6% complete.



We are also scoping the role of Workforce in both the **Digital Transformation** Programme and **Service Transformation** Programme. This will include training, TUPE, recruitment to new roles, organisational change and job evaluation, the scale of which is currently unknown. There will be some changes implemented to support the systems going live, such as, training, and new band 5 nursing roles but major changes will not take place until the new system is up and running in October 2025.

Over the past 12 months we have changed our approach to supporting the organisation through the implementation of our new strategic advisory model, moving the directorate away from being transactionally focused. During this time, we have introduced a People First three-tier model, which is a framework designed to streamline HR processes and improve efficiency by categorising HR services into distinct levels or tiers, ranging from self service for routine inquiries to complex and specialist advice, supported by HR Business Partners. For NHS 24, the implementation of the three-tier model aims to transform operational HR processes to become more streamlined, automated, and data-driven, improving workforce experiences for employees and managers. It allows workforce professionals to focus on strategic activities while ensuring that routine tasks are handled effectively. The next stage of the model will be to introduce chatbots.

Over the next 12 to 18 months, we will continue to strengthen the workforce directorate being a strategic partner to the organisation's leadership by providing insights and guidance on strategic decisions, such as workforce transformation, talent acquisition strategies, workforce planning, and initiatives to improve employee engagement. The strategic advisory model relies heavily on data and analytics to inform decision-making. HR and OD professionals will use data to identify trends, predict future workforce needs, and measure the impact of workforce initiative. There is a greater emphasis on talent management, including identifying and developing high-potential employees, succession planning, and creating career development programmes. Learning and development programmes built over the previous two years will also become mainstreamed.

Digitalisation will remain a key priority across the Directorate as we look to use data to provide insights and improved data driven decision making through personalisation/personification. We will look at how we use the data from different sources to create understanding of how staff are working and using LearnMore 24 will personalise learning for staff. We will seek to create a digital workplace in which our people can thrive by ensuring digital solutions span the whole of the employee lifecycle - automating traditional office tasks, implementing efficiencies, continuous collaborations, and improvements. To do this we will need to extend digital skills capability across the teams. The NES Digital and Data Capability Framework which outlines the digital skills, knowledge, and behaviours everyone needs to do their job will help us identify where we need to upskill and develop.

Key focuses for delivery will be:

- **Workplace Improvement:** Aim to make NHS 24 a better place to work, focusing on creating a supportive environment. Our approach to health, safety and wellbeing will focus on proactive and preventative interventions.
- **Digital Transformation:** Emphasise new ways of working enabled by technology and continuous improvement.
- **Values-Led Culture:** Focus on staff wellbeing and develop tools and infrastructure for effective service delivery, exploring hybrid roles for sustainable working practices.
- **Training and Development:** Adopt a quality-led approach to training, creating clear career pathways, and embracing technology to improve working methods and staff development.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Strive to retain, develop, and attract a diverse and talented workforce, building an inclusive culture reflective of the communities served.
- **Recruit and retain talent:** Develop new roles and flexible working opportunities, including hybrid and blended roles, and introduce internal mobility programmes to facilitate easy movement of staff across locations and organisations within NHS 24. We will look to recruit "digital leaders" who have an agile mindset, lead change, and drive the business forward with a digital first approach.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Directorate

This directorate is responsible for the information and communication technology infrastructure and services within NHS 24. Alignment of organisational strategic goals with the appropriate use of digital systems and services is overseen and managed by Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The current infrastructure was completely refreshed and upgraded in 2022 and ended the stabilisation phase.



The next phase will deliver the systems exploitation and innovation for NHS 24 through the **Digital Transformation** Programme. This includes the ability to deliver safe, effective, and accessible services, alongside the key enablers that support optimising the benefits of new technology through collaboration with users, staff, and partners.

In addition to NHS Inform, several other websites are hosted, and content managed via the same hosting provider and content management system: Scotland's Service Directory, Self-Help Guides, GP.Scot Care Information Scotland, Breathing Space, Telecare Self Check Tool, and Falls Assistant. It is essential therefore that NHS Inform, and associated digital web services, are hosted on infrastructure that meets the requirements to deliver 24/7/365 availability with maximum uptime and business continuity.

Webchat and chatbot technology, opens other channels to accessing health information and providing quick answers to the less complicated questions callers ask NHS 24. They have the potential to reduce the demand on the live service and address issues around equality of access. ICT have introduced new chatbot technology through the NHS 24 Online mobile app which provides quick access to symptom checkers and service finders for services such as GPs, Pharmacies, minor injury units etc.

Critical to this is NHS 24's ability to increase both the capability and capacity of the ICT Directorate to support the digital leadership ambitions and objectives of NHS 24 over the next 5 years whilst increasing the value for money return on costs and investments in ICT / Digital products and services. In 2024/2025 we are moving Service Management in-house to allow for a reduction of recurring costs and improved service stability. To achieve this ICT and Workforce have worked together to implement organisational change. The current contract for the Managed Service expires October 2025.

Finance Directorate

This Directorate covers areas including Finance, Estates, Governance, Risk & Resilience, Chief Executive Office, and the Board. Finance includes procurement and payroll services that we get through collaboration with other Health Boards. The Finance team is responsible for the effective and efficient use of all financial resources within NHS 24, in alignment with the Annual Delivery Plan.



The team are leading the Commercial workstream for the **Digital Transformation** Programme and the Estates Sustainability Plan review of future Estates requirements. Both programmes of work require significant input from the Finance, Estates, Risk & Resilience and Governance teams, but should reap rewards in terms of contribution to the Board's Strategy and Efficiencies programme.

The Directorate acknowledges the financial challenges across the NHS and strives to work within its current staffing levels despite this increase in workload in recent years. It is anticipated that continuous improvements via streamlining workloads shall help ensure the directorate can continue to provide the high-quality service that is currently in place and support the new programmes of work during this exciting time in NHS 24.

Transformation, Strategy, Planning and Performance (TSPP) Directorate



TSPP Directorate lead the delivery of NHS 24 Corporate Strategy 2023-2028 through the Corporate Delivery Plan (2024-2027) based on the Medium-Term Plan (MTP). This directorate brings together a range of functions including Performance, Programme Office, Stakeholder Engagement and Insights and Strategic Planning. Collectively, they drive transformation and continuous improvement in the planning, design, development, and delivery of all our services. Expertise within the directorate ensures they deliver effective, data and evidence driven, person-centred services with the population of Scotland, in collaboration with partners across health and care and beyond.

The Directorate manages a portfolio of change programmes and projects that support NHS 24 in delivering its corporate strategy and NHS Scotland and Health and Social Care Partnerships in the delivery of key organisational objectives. The Directorate holds responsibility to support NHS 24's transformation programmes. Over the next 12 to 18 months there will be a requirement to enhance project management capacity across the Directorate to support change and the transformation agenda and building and strengthening capacity to support a user-led service design approach. NHS 24 will look to work collaboratively with NHS Boards to expand service design / user research capacity across the system.

Communications Team



We have a full-service communications team that serves the internal and external requirements of the organisation and provides a broad range of corporate services that stretch beyond the core communications remit. This includes production and design of a suite of corporate publications, extensive staff engagement activity and the development of digital content which is used in NHS 24's range of digital products and services. This is as well as the core function of a communications team providing internal and external communications, media management, crisis management, reputation management and public affairs activity. We are constantly upskilling and cross skilling team members to stay up to date. We have introduced new revenue streams e.g. YouTube and work for other health boards.

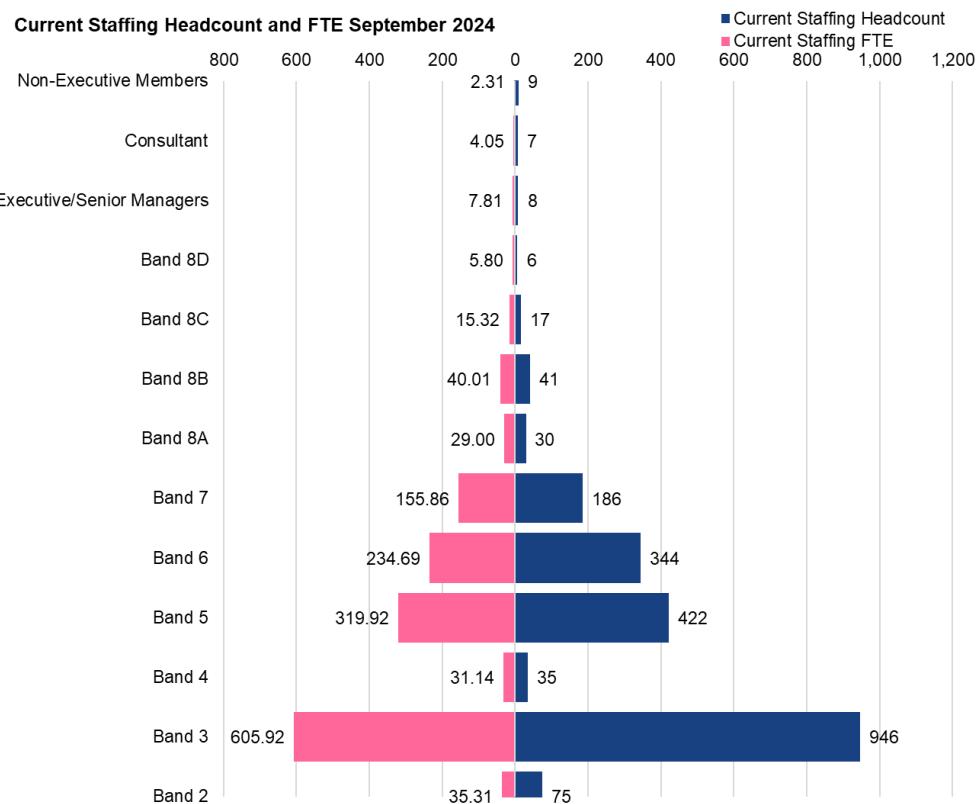
The Communications Delivery Plan sets out the high-level work plan for the corporate communications team and covers all core areas of responsibility to support the development and delivery of sustainable services, driving high quality staff engagement and promoting our organisation's key role within the broader health and care system. Audio Visual is an identified area for growth and the potential for income generation in the next 12 to 18 months.

In support of our Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme and NHS Scotland's aim to achieve net-zero emissions by 2040, the NHS 24 Communications Team take a digital first approach to all communication activity.

Current NHS 24 Workforce

As of 30 September 2024, NHS 24 employed 2126 staff (1,487.14 WTE) across 6 main contact centres, 3 local contact centres and 2 remote contact centres.

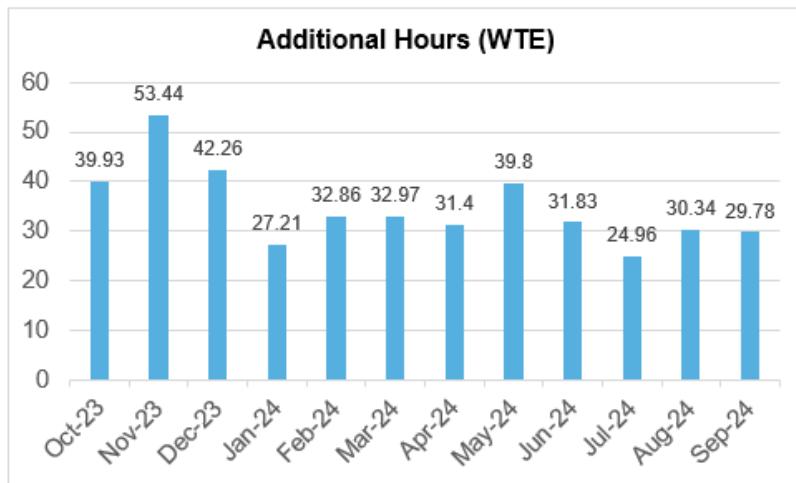
The chart below presents the current NHS 24 workforce split by grade. It is a useful tool to help identify where gaps in particular areas exist. As the largest cohorts of the NHS 24 core service are Call Handlers and Clinical Supervisors who sit within Agenda for Change Band 3 and Band 6 respectively it can be expected that both grades will have a larger headcount and proportion of WTE. Within Band 5, NHS 24 also has several frontline positions (Team Managers, Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners, Dental Nurses, Breathing Space Phoneline Advisors and Training Advisors) which explains the higher number of staff at this grade.



Annexe 2 details staff in post on 30 September 2024 and as a baseline shows an establishment gap of 113.48 WTE (7.08% vacancy factor) between current staff and projected future workforce needs. This can be broken down into a 17.93% vacancy across frontline nursing roles, and a 20.46% vacancy factor within the other clinical staff cohort which includes Pharmacy and Dental services. Many of the staff work part time (71% overall, 81% frontline), which allows us to ensure we have the right capacity 24 hours a day 365 days a year and shift patterns that work for them. Over the next five years, our people will see a change to the workplace where we will embrace digital technology and new and effective ways of working with increased flexibility.

Supplementary Staffing

Where we have vacancies and establishment gaps, fixed term contracts and staff working additional hours have been utilised to meet key performance targets. In addition, we have introduced the role of Recruitment Ambassadors to support recruitment activity and have refreshed the Hiring Manager pool for frontline volume recruitment. These roles are undertaken using additional hours.



Age Profile

As the pension age increases with people working longer, we have up to five generations of employees working together. The changing profile impacts amongst other things on our workforce planning, competition for talent, addressing skills gaps and experience at work.

The age profile of the workforce shows 31.28% are over the age of 50, with 9.17% aged 60 and above. NHS 24 is required to consider longer term plans for making more roles within the organisation more attractive to those within younger age brackets, whilst ensuring the adoption of policies to support a flexible approach for all staff.

	Average Age	% of workforce 50 and over
NHS 24	42.14	31.28%
Call Handler	38.36	24.12%
Clinical Supervisor	44.30	33.59%
Mental Health Nurse Practitioner	43.14	28.57%
Senior Charge Nurse	47.65	44.44%
Clinical Services Manager	54.21	72.70%

	Staff Currently over 59	Staff over 59
in 5 years		
Clinical Supervisor	6.25%	18.75%
Mental Health Nurse Practitioner	5.71%	22.86%
Senior Charge Nurse	9.26%	21.30%
Clinical Services Manager	18.18%	45.45%
Head of Clinical Service	28.57%	71.43%

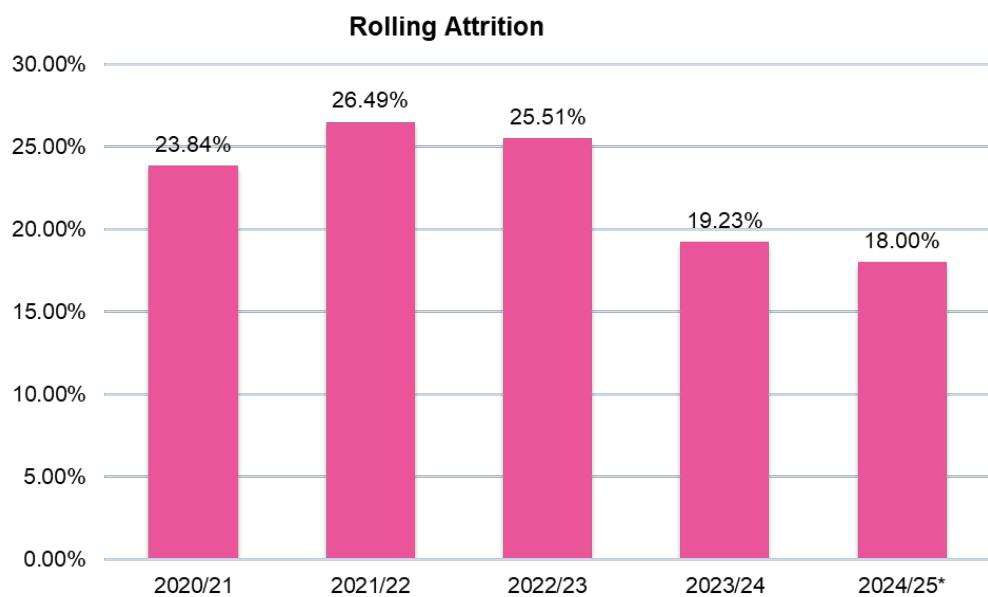
Scenario planning can also help plan for predicted changes or wider workforce types and numbers. For example, around 72% of the Clinical Service Manager workforce is over 50 years of age, scenario planning could support retirement predictions. Wider workforce scenario planning and examination is also important to ensure the availability of an experienced group of staff for future vacancies or hard to fill posts. This highlights the importance of integrated workforce planning data that can take account of all the health professionals required to deliver the desired outcomes, establish a comprehensive understanding of workforce challenges across the whole system, and support decisions about how this might be addressed.

The table below details the average age of successful candidates. As the world of work changes, we need to consider and cater for a wider range of people than before, with a multigenerational workforce. This could create several challenges, such as technology readiness, succession planning and knowledge management. We need to be curious and continually update knowledge on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

Skillset	Average Age
Clinical Supervisor	43
Mental Health Nurse Practitioner	44
Senior Charge Nurse	45
Call Handler	32

Workforce Attrition

Workforce attrition analysis allows NHS 24 to identify why employees voluntarily leave, what might have prevented them from leaving and how we can use the data to predict attrition risks for key roles. The chart below shows the rolling turnover for NHS 24 over the last year, this is inclusive of all NHS 24 leavers. The figure is not inclusive of internal staff movements to other roles within NHS 24.

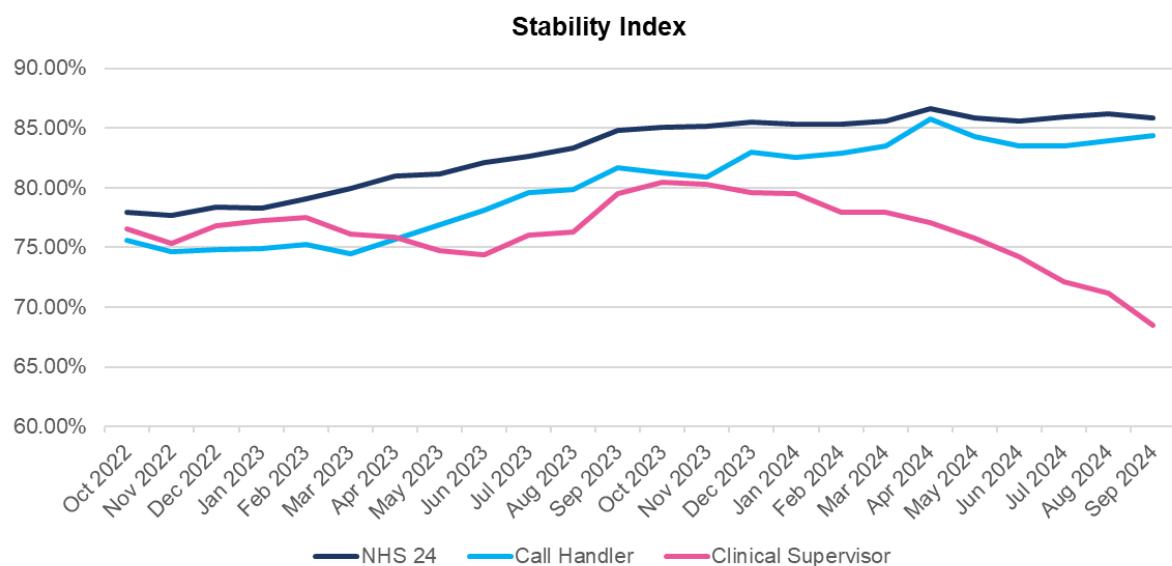


Attrition is actively and proactively managed to ensure a collective understanding across NHS 24 of the challenges. NHS 24 has an attrition improvement plan, approved by the Executive Management Team and Staff Governance Committee. Work has been ongoing to retain staff, the implementation of the check-in conversations and questionnaires has provided valuable insights into why employees stay at NHS 24. Staff Experience Groups being established in each centre has allowed for positive partnership working and opportunities for staff to provide feedback.

Since implementing the plan attrition has reduced from 27.60% to 18.00%. Our retention strategy focuses on developing a positive organisational culture, building an effective onboarding programme, improving management and leadership skills and a commitment to managing health and wellbeing.

When thinking about staff retention, it is useful to consider the stability rate as it measures how effective NHS 24 is at retaining experienced staff. It can help inform which staff groups have good or poor stability and can provide us with a better understanding of the labour dynamics both internally and externally. The stability index formula is the number of employees at end of period with one year's service or more/number of employees in post one year ago

A combination of high attrition with low stability will highlight an organisational attrition problem. If the stability and attrition are both high, then often the problem is confined to a smaller number of posts. NHS 24 aims to continue to both reduce attrition levels and increase stability.



Retention of key roles, Call Handlers, and Clinical Supervisors, remains a challenge. 41% of leavers over the last rolling 12 months exited the organisation with under 12 months service.

A strategic and integrated approach has been taken to understand and curb attrition. A cross-directorate Attrition Working Group has been established and several wide-ranging interventions implemented:

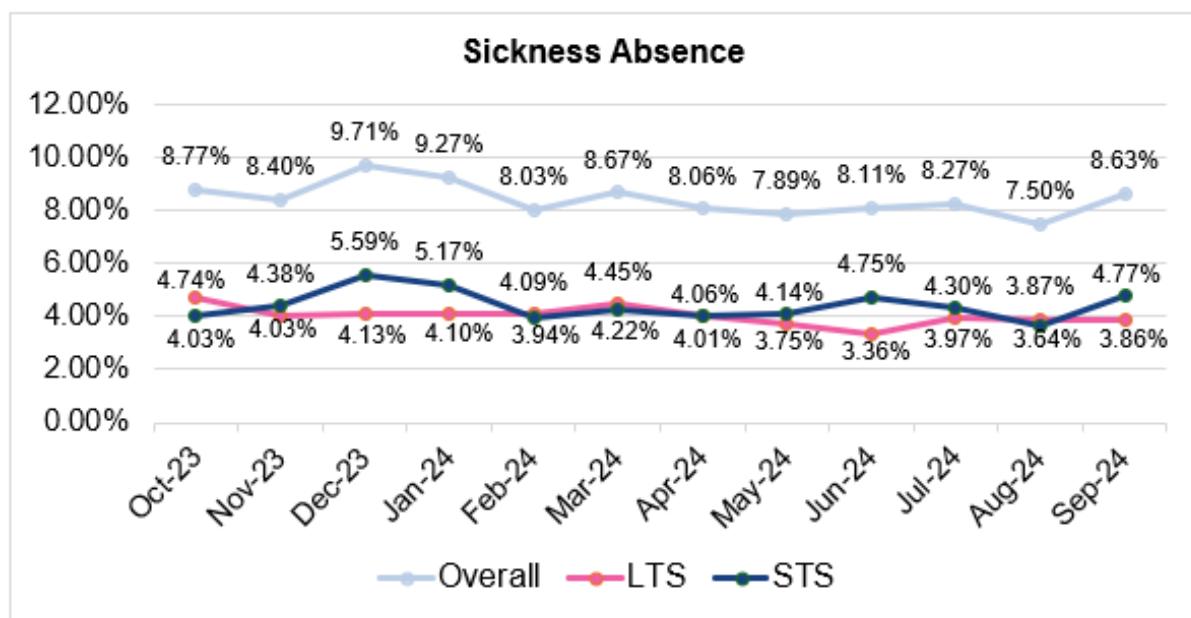
Recruit right, first time and retain staff

- Collaborated with Finance, Practice Education and Central Resource Planning to develop a forecasting plan on a page
- Created highly insightful content on NHS 24 as an employer
- Developed candidate personas
- Introduced an Initial Assessment Interview
- Introduced an NHS 24 Living the Values Assessment Platform
- Introduced a new Values Based Competency Interview
- Recruited and trained an internal pool of hiring managers
- Promoted completion of Exit Interviews and actioned feedback received
- Three, six and nine month check in questionnaires introduced to understand why staff stay with us and build on the results.

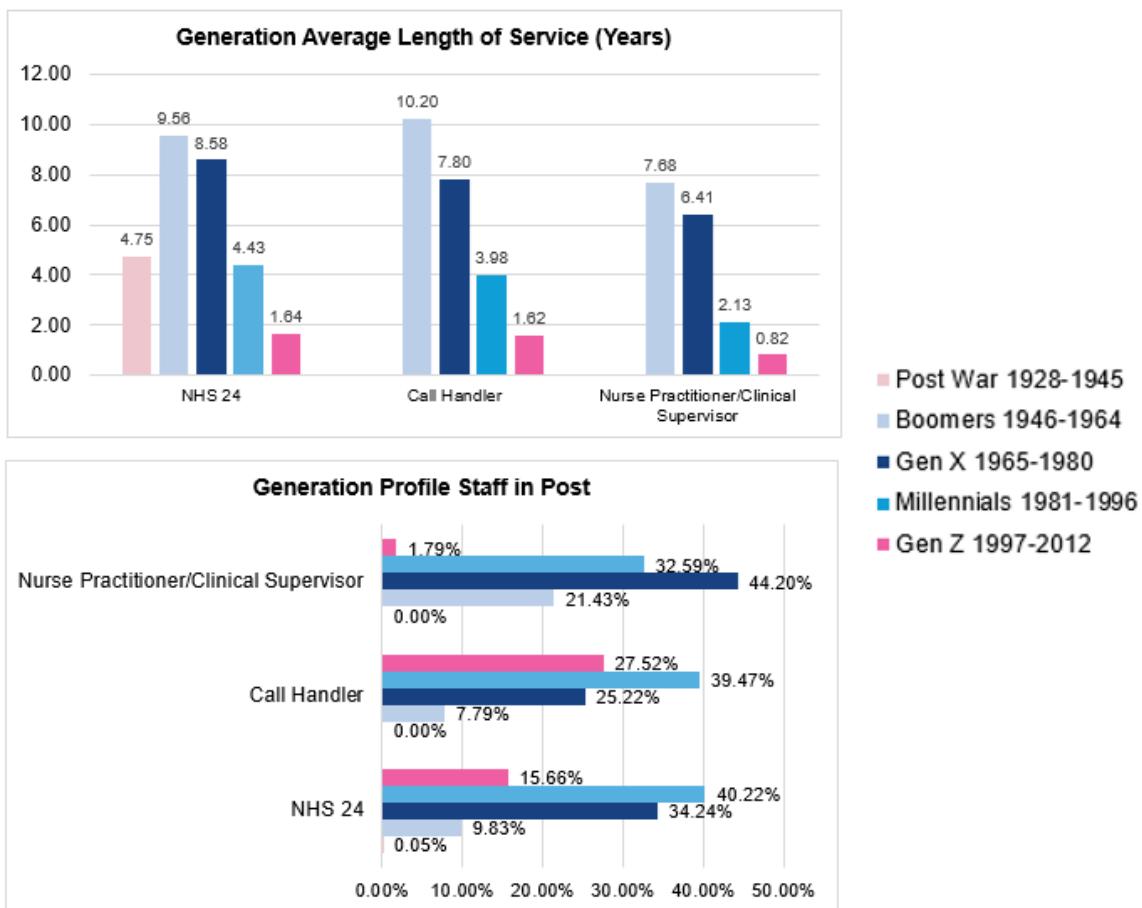
Sickness Absence

NHS 24 continues to proactively work with staff, managers, and trade union representatives to review the causes of sickness absence, support staff at times of need and move to a culture of attendance at work. People are NHS 24's most valuable asset, it is only through our staff our services are delivered and improved. Promoting staff attendance at work is central to safe and effective delivery of patient care.

Scottish Government continues to monitor NHS 24 attendance levels against a national target of 4%. A factor for absence is built into NHS 24 planning assumptions and resource calculated accordingly. NHS 24 aims to maximise attendance at work; however, it is recognised that a certain level of absence due to ill health may occur. NHS 24 encourages an emphasis on proactive, early, and informal interventions to support staff to either remain at work or facilitate an earlier return to work. Our Wellbeing Matters Strategy builds on this premise by promoting an integrated approach to wellbeing and simplifying the support and resources available for staff.



Annexe 1



Annexe 2

Frontline Skill Sets	31st March Baseline Position	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Nursing and Midwifery				
Band 5	68	117	109	108.95
Band 6	174.66	221	219	218
Band 7	89.8	115.5	112.22	92.9
Band 8A	1	1	1	0
Band 8B	18.4	20	20	20
Band 8C	1	1	1	0
Other Therapeutic				
Band 5	28.02	31	31	31
Band 6	11.2	12.74	12.74	12.74
Band 7	5.74	9.28	9.28	9.28
Band 8A	3.8	3.77	3.77	3.77
Allied Health Professional				
Band 6	3.01	5	5	0
Dental Support				
Band 2	8.15	11	11	11
Band 5	25.59	31	31	31
Band 6	4.96	4.48	4.48	4.48
Medical and Dental Consultant				
Medical and Dental Consultant	3.52	0	0	0
Personal and Social Care				
Band 2	4	8.6	5	3.7
Band 3	4.93	10.89	4.13	4.13
Band 5	3	3	2.6	2.6
Administrative Services				
Band 2	21.12	16	16	16
Band 3	569.39	583	583	583
Band 5	92.22	97.09	99.04	87.5

Corporate Functions	31st March Baseline Position	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Medical	8.26	7.11	7.06	6.46
Nursing	33.06	44.14	45.14	78
Service Delivery	74.33	86.87	85.63	87.25
ICT	45.68	61.6	58	64.36
CEO	7.82	5.13	5.13	5.13
Communications	10.40	13.4	13.4	13.4
Finance	14.72	21	22	23
Workforce	41.05	47.44	48.64	44.01
Transformation, Strategy, Planning and Performance	49.98	43	43	42

