

**NHS 24
BOARD MEETING
30 OCTOBER 2025
ITEM NO. 7
FOR ASSURANCE**

EXECUTIVE REPORT TO THE NHS 24 BOARD

Executive Sponsor:

Mr Jim Miller, Chief Executive Officer

Purpose:

This paper provides an overview of progress on the high-level activity associated with the delivery of the NHS 24 2025/26 Strategic Priorities and the NHS 24 2023-2028 Corporate Strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** This report provides updates against the agreed strategic priorities from our 2023-2028 Strategy.

2. DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE, HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES

2.1 Supporting the Delivery of Urgent and Unscheduled Care

2.1.1 Prof to Prof Initiatives Flow Navigation Centre (FNC+)

Our Associate Medical Director for Acute Care, Ms Julie Ronald, led a national, in-person gathering at the start of October, bringing together representatives from all territorial and national health boards. The meeting showcased the collaborative efforts between NHS 24 and NHS Lanarkshire, emphasising the positive outcomes achieved by streamlining A&E direct referrals through the Flow Navigation Centre (FNC+). The discussion highlighted the promising potential for this collaborative approach to be adopted by other health boards, further strengthening partnerships and enhancing patient care across Scotland.

2.1.2 Unscheduled Care Patient Group Direction (PGD)

A national Patient Group Direction for unscheduled care is now available on the NHS Scotland Community Pharmacy website, along with guidance and tools for community pharmacists. This allows patients who have lost or run out of prescribed medicines to receive urgent supplies directly from any community pharmacy, without needing to call 111.

2.1.3 Mental Health Pathway Evaluation

The Quality Improvement and Evaluation Team completed an evaluation of the second phase of the Mental Health pathway between the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and the NHS 24 Mental Health Hub. This evaluation examined how the pathway operates in practice, its impact on patient care, and the effectiveness of collaboration between services. The findings were presented to the Mental Health Programme Board and provided evidence on strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement. This enables the ongoing refinement of the pathway to better support individuals experiencing mental health crises.

2.2 Delivering Enhanced ICT & Digital Capability

2.2.1 International Collaboration in Digital Health

On 2 September 2025, NHS 24 had the privilege of hosting a delegation from the Ministry of Health, Singapore, representing the Office for Healthcare Transformation, an innovation office driving system-level change in healthcare delivery and self-management of health and disease.

As part of their Digital Mental Health Knowledge programme, the delegation met with teams from:

- The Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre
- Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH)
- The Digital Mental Health Innovation Cluster

Together, we explored a showcase of digital mental health and wellbeing solutions, highlighting Scotland's commitment to innovation and compassionate care.

During their visit with NHS 24 the delegation met with a multidisciplinary team including representatives from:

- The Mental Health Hub
- Breathing Space
- Living Life
- Our Police Scotland (PS)/Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) collaboration

This visit fostered meaningful dialogue, enabled shared learning, and strengthened international relationships in the pursuit of improved mental health outcomes through technology and service design.

2.2.2 Digital Transformation Programme (DTP)

Phase 2 of the development of our Contact Centre and Customer Relationship Management solution (CC/CRM) was completed and successfully launched across all territorial Boards in October 2025. The Data Warehouse workstream also completed the actions required to allow for reporting from our new solution in October 2025. The Phase 3 stage gate for the insourcing of the Service Desk for laptop and desktop support, was successfully passed.

The Training & Practice Education Team has continued to focus on Priority 1 of the Digital Transformation Programme Delivery Plan to train our workforce to competently and confidently use our new generation technology, with both Phase 1 and 2 training now concluded. Evaluation reports indicate that 100% of in-scope staff were signed off as competent, with a confidence rating of 98.7%. Phase 3, which will encompass all remaining services has commenced.

Throughout the same period, the Team continued to train new employees in frontline skillsets including Call Handlers, Clinical Supervisors, and Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners, with, cumulatively over the past quarter, 96% successfully completing their initial training programme.

2.2.3 Network and Information Systems Regulations (NIS-R) Audit

NHS 24 performed exceptionally well across all areas of the Network and Information Systems Regulations audit this year achieving an overall compliance rating of 97%.

The auditor's observations identified that NHS 24 showed clear commitment to the audit, with well-prepared evidence and detailed explanations, and this resulted in the achievement of over 90% compliance in all 17 categories and 63 sub-categories, including 100% compliance achieved in 9 categories and 54 sub-categories. This met the advanced key performance indicator, with overall compliance at 97%. Additionally, Public Sector Cyber Resilience Framework (PSCRF) controls have been integrated into tenders and contracts to ensure supplier compliance, and this was highlighted as an area of good practice by the auditor.

3. PROVIDING A WORKPLACE IN WHICH OUR PEOPLE CAN THRIVE

3.1 Developing & Empowering Our Workforce

3.1.1 Workforce Data and Digital Workplan

The Workforce Data and Digital Workplan was designed to embed digital-first thinking and data-driven decision-making across the organisation. Spanning three years from October 2023 to September 2026, the workplan comprised 66 targeted actions aimed at streamlining operational processes, enhancing workforce analytics, and improving employee experience through automation and digital solutions. Year 1 saw the successful implementation of 23 initiatives. Year 2 is now complete with a further 20 tasks completed including Candidate and Hiring Manager automated feedback questionnaires, Attrition dashboards, an automated Flexible Working Process, Hiring Manager Hub, Stress Risk Assessment automated process and digital recording of Trade Union activity.

3.1.2 Recruitment and Retention of Clinical Supervisors

NHS 24 achieved a historic milestone in clinical supervisor recruitment, reaching and maintaining a full establishment of 185 whole time equivalent (WTE) in August 2025. This success was attributed to a multi-pronged strategy which included open

and online events, career fayres, partnerships with employability organisations, and a 12-month extended corporate induction programme. The introduction of buddy systems and continuous professional development (CPD) supports further strengthened onboarding and retention.

Targeted actions within the Workforce Plan have led to significant improvements in clinician retention, with attrition remaining below target at 13%. The local and national attrition groups continue to meet regularly with a specific focus on reducing clinical supervisor attrition, which has seen a reduction of 4.3% this year.

3.1.3 Hybrid Working Pilot

The Hybrid Working Pilot is progressing well, with two active Tests of Change now underway initially within the Health Information Team and more recently extended to the Dental Team. These pilots have helped explore how hybrid working can be effectively implemented across different service areas.

Early feedback has been encouraging, with staff reporting positive experiences regarding flexibility, wellbeing, and engagement. These initial results suggest that hybrid working could support both individual and team performance when thoughtfully applied.

Robust protocols have been thoroughly tested and refined to ensure that our information governance responsibilities are fully upheld within the hybrid working model.

Practical guidance and resources have been developed to support wider adoption. This includes capturing learning from the pilots, identifying what works well, and creating tools that will benefit all staff while safeguarding the integrity of our services.

3.1.4 Reduced Working Week

A sub-group of the Area Partnership Forum (APF) has continued to progress Phase 2 of the Reduced Working Week (RWW) programme for NHS 24, in line with the national directive to reduce staff contracted hours from 37.5 to 36 by April 2026. An implementation plan has been produced and submitted to Scottish Government, outlining mitigation strategies such as workload prioritisation, lean process redesign, and digital enablement. Operational modelling has continued to assess the impact on service delivery, staffing, and financial sustainability, with a particular focus on clinical services. NHS 24 also continues to engage with national working groups to support policy alignment and funding discussions.

3.1.5 Attendance Improvement Taskforce

NHS 24 implemented an Attendance Improvement Taskforce in response to increased absence rates. The Taskforce brings together colleagues from across the organisation as well as representatives from Trade Union and Professional Bodies, to deliver a structured action plan focused on early intervention, wellbeing, and supportive management practices.

Progress has been reviewed regularly, with actions phased across short, medium, and longer-term horizons. Recent developments included enhanced data tools to support managers, pilot initiatives to improve onboarding, and clarification of the process for alternative duties. Staff engagement has remained central to the approach, with feedback helping to shape future improvements.

3.1.6 Disability Confident Leader Accreditation

NHS 24 has successfully renewed its status as a Disability Confident Leader, reaffirming its commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive workplace for disabled colleagues. This accreditation, awarded by the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions, recognises NHS 24's continued efforts to challenge misconceptions, promote positive attitudes, and ensure fair treatment in recruitment and employment practices.

3.1.7 Leadership Development

Following the successful delivery of the Leadership Development Programme, a new 'Emerging Leaders' Programme is being developed for new and aspiring leaders. A pilot programme for Band 5 leaders will take place by year end, and following a review of pilot feedback, will launch in 2026. This will be further developed for Band 6 leaders, working with Practice Education colleagues to ensure a clinical overlay. This initiative aligns closely with existing offerings and will create a leadership development pathway within NHS 24.

3.1.8 iMatter Results

As previously reported, NHS 24 saw a positive increase in iMatter results in 2025. The final stage of the iMatter process was the action planning phase which closed in early September. Positive increases were also noted in this phase, demonstrating both a consistent upward trend in results and a strong organisational commitment to continuous improvement in staff experience.

	2024	2025
Response Rate	76%	82%
Employee Engagement Index score	77	79
Action Planning submission	92%	95%

A range of team stories from various directorates were shared with the national iMatter team following a request to share NHS 24 good practice to support other Boards. The Annual iMatter Report will be published in November 2025.

3.1.9 Anti-Racism

A positive feedback session on the NHS 24 Anti-Racism Action Plan took place in September 2025 with the Scottish Government. The progress made to date drew positive comment from the national team, with strong staff engagement and the wider demonstrable commitment to equality and inclusion specifically highlighted.

Collaboration work with the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) supported this initiative, with the sharing of learning and good practice on their established Anti-Racism Staff Network, to inform NHS 24 approach as we build in this area.

Whilst work initially commenced on the Anti-Racism Action Plan in April 2025, the plan itself was formally launched in October to align with Black History Month, as a tangible demonstration of NHS 24's commitment.

4. BEING A COLLABORATIVE FORWARD-THINKING PARTNER

4.1 Continuing to Strengthen NHS 24's Organisational Effectiveness

4.1.1 NHS 24 Annual Review 2025

On 30 September 2025, NHS 24 welcomed Tim McDonnell, Director of Primary Care, Scottish Government, and Roddy MacDonald, Deputy Director of Primary Care Capability and Head of Capability and Sponsorship Division at Scottish Government, to conduct the NHS 24 Annual Review. The session was broadcast via a live link, enabling members of the public and staff to join and participate in the session. Dr Cheyne, Board Chair, provided a presentation which focused on collaboration with other health boards, aligning with government strategies, and pursuing digital transformation to improve services and efficiency. Key questions raised included recruitment and performance, accessibility, digital inclusion, mental health support, partnership working, and addressing equality and intersectionality in service design.

4.1.2 Estates Sustainability

The lease for the first and second floors at Lumina Contact Centre concluded on 13 September 2025. The keys have been returned and the floorspace has been fully vacated. Plans for phase 2, to exit the ground floor of the building by June 2026, are underway.

4.1.3 Corporate Escalation Level

NHS 24 continues to operate at Moderate level within the Corporate Escalation Framework.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1** The Board is asked to note progress against NHS 24's agreed strategic priorities. Members of the Executive Management Team will be happy to provide further detail or answer questions in relation to any of the content of this paper.