

NHS Highland Chief Executive's Update

May 2025



Fiona Davies,
Chief Executive NHS Highland

Cabinet Secretary Visit

We welcomed The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Neil Gray MSP, to NHS Highland last month, as he visited the National Treatment Centre and our Emergency Department at Raigmore.

The Cabinet Secretary announced additional funding of £2.6 million for the National Treatment Centre (NTC) Highland. This funding will support us to continue to deliver thousands of additional orthopaedic and ophthalmic operations every year. It will also support us to recruit new nurses and specialist clinicians to build on the outstanding success the team at the NTC Highland have delivered since it opened in 2023. The additional funding is expected to allow the NTC to carry out around 8,418 procedures in the coming year – a 67% increase on the 5,054 commissioned by the Scottish Government last year.

The Cabinet Secretary visited the Emergency Department at Raigmore Hospital to learn more about the work being done by our dedicated teams to improve unscheduled care across our Board area. We recognise that, similar to other areas across Scotland and the UK, we have been experiencing high levels of demand across all of our services. However, we are always looking at ways we can improve our patient experience and ensure safe, person-centred, and effective care.

We work closely with our community colleagues to improve patient flow within our system, and have a good working relationship with the Scottish Ambulance Service colleagues to work together to try and mitigate waiting times through joint escalation plans. This work includes early indication of waits, clinical meets between Emergency Department and Admission Ward staff, opening of extra space and increasing patient movement and bed flow. I know the Cabinet Secretary was impressed by this work. I want to thank our leadership and clinical colleagues and teams who helped support this visit and conveyed this important work to the Cabinet Secretary. I also wish to thank our teams across our Emergency Departments and the NTC for their dedication to our patients.

Sutherland Care at Home

A planned Care Inspectorate inspection of NHS Highland's Care at Home Service in Sutherland in April highlighted a number of areas for improvement within the service. An Improvement Notice was issued to the service, and an Action Plan we had put in place to meet our quality standards through

our Adult Social Care Quality Assurance activity was strengthened to meet all areas of the Improvement Notice.

In addition to the improvement work of the service, NHS Highland, as part of the public protection partnership, is supporting the service and those in receipt of the service under Large Scale Investigation.

Finally, our Adult Social Care Quality Assurance activity continues to be strengthened. We recognise this may be a worrying time for service users, families, our colleagues and communities but we are working hard to address these concerns as soon as we can. I can report that our teams have been working hard to deliver the recommendations in the Improvement Notice.

Vascular

NHS Highland continues to receive support from other boards for complicated vascular procedures which require the services of an arterial centre. Simple vascular procedures such as renal access are being undertaken locally, along with diagnostics and assessment.

There is a national shortage of vascular surgeons and interventional radiologists. Boards throughout Scotland are competing for this specialist workforce group and Highland has not been successful as candidates tell us that they would prefer to work in larger centres. As I have updated the Board previously, myself and my team in medical and acute leadership have been working relentlessly with other Board Chief Executives and their teams to bring a resolution to both the short term challenges and a settled model for the future, ensuring that the population of the Highlands have access to services as recommended by the leaders in the Vascular field, the Vascular Society.

I am grateful to my chief officer and the medical leadership for their commitment to this work throughout the last 18 months, liaising with their equivalents in Boards across Scotland and with the Scottish Government team working on a national plan for Vascular Services.

They continue to work with colleagues to ensure the ongoing access to specialist vascular care and to ensure service can be delivered as locally as possible for the people of the Highlands.

Integration with The Highland Council

NHS Highland and The Highland Council are looking at different ways to manage some services. NHS Highland delivers Adult Social Care on behalf of the Council, and the Council delivers some child health services for the NHS. This is called the 'Lead Agency model'. We have found by talking to staff that this model could be clearer on how services are organised and how decisions are made.

All other councils in Scotland use a joint model, where an 'Integration Joint Board' oversees some health and social care services. The Council and NHS Highland are looking at whether this type of model might work better for Highland. They will be using funding reserved for transforming services to explore options and make recommendations.

This will be a long-term project, and you won't see any immediate change. We will make sure staff are involved and informed as the project progresses.

To take this forward over the next 12 months, a Models of Integration Steering Group has been set up. This includes Councillor and Officer representation from the Council and Executive and Non-Executive representation from NHS Highland. A Senior Officers' Group including relevant Chief Officers/Directors and professional leads will oversee the approach to analysis of data and

subsequent proposals for change. A number of subgroups will support this, including one dedicated to engagement with staff and a professional advisory group.

More information will be shared as the programme progresses and colleagues will have the opportunity to feed into decision making.



HEPMA

We are delighted to report that all wards, other than SCBU, in Raigmore Hospital are now live with HEPMA. SCBU is awaiting a WellBaby ward to be built on TrakCare.

This builds on the successful roll-out of the Hospital Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (HEPMA) programme in Caithness General Hospital, Dunbar Hospital and Wick Town and County Hospital in February 2023. The system is also in place in New Craigs Hospital, the National Treatment Centre, Badenoch and Strathspey Community Hospital and Broadford Hospital. We will also deliver the system in Lorn & Islands Hospital in Oban this summer. The remaining hospitals in our area will also have a roll-out of HEPMA once funding has been identified to upgrade their WiFi coverage. An upgrade at the Belford Hospital is currently being planned for 2025/26.

HEPMA is the new electronic prescribing and medicines administration system which will replace the paper-based system used across North of Scotland hospitals. HEPMA will effectively remove the 'kardex' from the end of a patient's bed and replace it with an electronic system.

It is a web-based application, meaning it will be accessible to healthcare professionals from any device (PC or laptop) which is connected to the secure NHS network. The HEPMA system will also provide all clinical staff with an integrated view of a patient's medication, as well as a robust audit trail. Crucially, the key driver for implementation of HEPMA is improvements in patient safety.

The system provides a range of significant clinical, safety, informatics and management benefits for the prescribing and administration of medicines, which could not otherwise be achieved using the current paper-based system.

I want to thank all colleagues at Raigmore Hospital during this phase of the roll-out for their patience and understanding.

Scottish Pharmacy Awards 2025

Congratulations to Lochardil Pharmacy and KinWell Pharmacy for winning at the Scottish Pharmacy Awards 2025. Lochardil Pharmacy won Community Pharmacy of the Year for their response to an unprecedented challenge when a vehicle crashed into their building. They demonstrated incredible resilience, reopening within 24 hours, and maintained patient care without disruption.

KinWell Pharmacy in Nairn won the Innovation in Community Pharmacy Practice for its ground-breaking development of Quick Care, the first ever digital Pharmacy First tool. A huge congratulations to everyone involved!



Lochardil Pharmacy



KinWell Pharmacy

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