

SUMMARY REPORT OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Name of Committee	Highland Health and Social Care
Date of Meeting	01 July 2026
Committee Chair	Gerry O'Brien

KEY POINTS FROM DISCUSSION AND ESCALATION

ALERT

- Adult Social Care continued to face significant financial pressures, with a projected financial gap for 2026/27 and ongoing reliance on supplementary staffing, particularly within care homes.
- Workforce recruitment and retention challenges remained a recurring theme across social care, learning disability services, care homes, primary care and remote/rural services.
- Home Farm Care Home remains subject to a Care Inspectorate improvement notice, with leadership, staffing and estate issues requiring action and ongoing assurance.
- Housing availability and specialist accommodation remain significant barriers to supporting people with complex learning disability needs locally and reducing out-of-area placements.
- Concerns were raised regarding the sustainability of social care provision should provider failures or significant workforce pressures occur, and the need for greater clarity regarding mitigation and business continuity arrangements.

ASSURE

- Year-End Finance Report 2025/26 – Limited Assurance
- Integrated Performance & Quality Report (IPQR) – Limited Assurance
- Adult Social Care Transformation Plans 2026/27 and Beyond – Moderate Assurance
- Learning Disability Services Assurance Report – Moderate Assurance
- Care Governance Update – Moderate Assurance

ADVISE

- A development session should be considered to provide Committee members with a deeper understanding of the Highland Care Model, Adult Social Care Transformation Programme, Strategic Commissioning Plan and related workstreams.
- Future reports should continue to focus on the narrative behind performance data and explain what improvements or deterioration mean in practice rather than relying solely on headline figures.
- Further assurance should be developed around safe staffing in social care and how assurance from existing governance structures is reported to Committee.
- The Committee requested further information on: Discharge Without Delay and associated transformation workstreams; Readmissions and system flow considerations; Governance arrangements for independent prescribing and pharmacy-led services; Community Link Worker outcomes and impact; Business continuity and contingency planning within social care services.

RISKS

- Ongoing Adult Social Care financial pressures, unfunded services, supplementary staffing costs and the requirement to deliver significant savings programmes during 2026/27.
- Recruitment and retention challenges affecting care homes, learning disability services, social care and primary care services.

- Dependency on supplementary staffing in some care settings.
- Delayed discharge and care pathway pressures requiring ongoing transformation work.

ACTIONS

- Chief Officer and Committee Chair to explore a future development session focused on Adult Social Care Transformation, the Highland Care Model and Strategic Commissioning Plans.
- A detailed paper on the Discharge Without Delay Programme to be presented at a future Committee meeting.
- Further consideration to be given to how safe staffing assurance is reported to the Committee.
- Community Link Worker annual outcomes report and Primary Care Strategy development papers to be shared with Committee members.
- Chief Officer to consider providing a future update on social care contingency and mitigation arrangements for service disruption or provider failure.

LEARNING

The Committee identified a number of areas that would benefit from future development and assurance sessions, including:

- Adult Social Care Transformation and the Highland Care Model.
- Strategic Commissioning and Market Facilitation Planning.
- Discharge Without Delay, Hospital at Home and related flow improvement programmes.
- Safe Staffing within Social Care.
- Primary Care Strategy and future models of care.
- Learning Disability "Coming Home" programme and complex care pathways.
- Committee effectiveness and assurance through the forthcoming self-assessment process.