

SUMMARY REPORT OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Name of Committee	Highland Health and Social Care
Date of Meeting	02 September 2026
Committee Chair	Gerry O'Brien

KEY POINTS FROM DISCUSSION AND ESCALATION

ALERT

- Adult Social Care continued to face significant financial pressures, with a forecast year-end overspend of £27.119m and ongoing pressures relating to locum and supplementary staffing costs.
- Delayed discharge remained a significant system challenge, with concerns raised regarding workforce capacity, community infrastructure and sustainability of discharge improvement plans.
- Vaccination uptake remained below national and international benchmarks across a number of programmes despite recent improvements and stabilisation in performance.
- Unmet need, waiting lists and care-at-home pressures continued to present challenges across health and social care services.
- Ongoing uncertainty remained regarding the future sustainability of the Chronic Pain Service and wider service pressures associated with financial constraints.
- Strategic plans capture the specific requirements of young people transitioning to adult services.

ASSURE

- Finance Update Month 3 2026/27 – Limited Assurance.
- Integrated Performance and Quality Report – Limited Assurance.
- Discharge Without Delay Programme – Moderate Assurance on programme design and governance arrangements; Limited Assurance on delivery of improvement trajectories.
- Highland Drug, Alcohol and Recovery Services Report – Substantial Assurance.
- Draft HSCP Annual Report 2025/26 – Moderate Assurance.
- Vaccination Improvement Plan Update – Moderate Assurance.

ADVISE

- Future reports should continue to provide greater context around performance measures, methodology and underlying demand pressures.
- Members highlighted the importance of integrated impact assessments and consideration of health inequalities when assessing service and financial pressures.
- Further work should continue on strengthening discharge pathways, Home First approaches and coordination between acute and community services.
- Learning from other health boards and national collaboratives should continue to inform local improvement programmes.
- Opportunities should be explored to celebrate and communicate positive performance achievements highlighted within the HSCP Annual Report

RISKS

- Ongoing financial pressures and the ability to deliver planned savings and transformation programmes.
- Delayed discharge, system flow challenges and workforce capacity constraints across health and social care services.
- Continued reliance on supplementary staffing and locum expenditure.
- Low vaccination uptake and health inequalities affecting access to preventative services.
- Service sustainability risks associated with specialist services and ongoing demand pressures.

ACTIONS

- Safe staffing assurance actions to remain in progress and continue to be reported through Committee reporting arrangements.
- Risk to be considered as a future Committee development session topic.
- Details of GP involvement in prescribing governance arrangements to be shared with members.
- A future update on the Chronic Pain Service and its strategic direction to be brought to Committee.
- A future update on the Discharge Without Delay Programme to be presented to Committee.
- An update on the Post Infection and Associated Complex Chronic Conditions Service would be provided through a future Chief Officer's Report.

LEARNING

- Discharge Without Delay and wider system flow improvement programmes.
- Financial sustainability, savings delivery and transformation planning.
- Workforce sustainability and community capacity to support service redesign.
- Vaccination service delivery, population engagement and reducing health inequalities.
- Transitions from children to adult services and improving outcomes for young people and families.