

**NHS 24  
BOARD MEETING**

**02 MARCH 2023  
ITEM NO 7  
FOR ASSURANCE**

## **EXECUTIVE REPORT TO THE BOARD**

This paper provides an overview of progress on the high-level activity associated with the delivery of the NHS 24 2022/23 Strategic Priorities and developing NHS 24 corporate strategy.

**Executive Sponsor:** Chief Executive

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1** The format of this report provides updates against the agreed strategic priorities for 2022/23. NHS 24 is developing its new strategy from 2023 and this report will provide an update on progress against that strategy to the Board.

### **2. URGENT & UNSCHEDULED CARE**

#### **2.1 Supporting the delivery of urgent and unscheduled care**

##### **Winter Communications**

- 2.1.1** NHS 24 delivers, on behalf of NHSScotland, the annual winter health preparedness campaign 'Healthy Know How'. This was launched by the Cabinet Secretary in our Lumina Centre during a very busy media call. The campaign ran throughout December into early January across TV, radio, digital, and outdoor media. It was complemented by a sponsorship package with DC Thompson and pay per click activity using Google Adwords. Significant support was given to the campaign from across the health sector, Scottish Government, third sector and a trade union. Post campaign effectiveness evaluation is underway.
- 2.1.2** Promotion of the NHS 24 online app continued across all social media channels, supported with media releases and distribution of posters including QR codes to all GP practises across Scotland.
- 2.1.3** The real-time pop-up banner was deployed throughout the period on 24.scot advising patients on alternative routes to care and our busy service periods. Between December 23 – January 3, the 'When to call 111' page received 22,983 visits. This represented a 19% increase in visits on the previous two weekends in December. 3522 visitors clicked on redirection links to Symptom Checkers.

NHS 24 was subject to significant media interest throughout this period. Opportunities for positive media coverage included STV Live broadcasting from our Lumina centre and BBC Reporting Scotland also broadcast live from Norseman House.

## **Vaccination Programme**

2.1.4 The flu and COVID-19 vaccination programme for staff has now ended, with 50.22% of staff have received the COVID-19 booster vaccination and 49.78% of staff have received the flu vaccination. This does not include staff who have received their vaccinations out with NHS 24, which will increase that overall percentage. These figures are in line with the national position across Boards.

## **Redesign of Urgent Care**

2.1.5 NHS 24 continues to deliver the national pathway for those self-presenting to ED. Data presented to the RUC high impact change group is showing a reduction in self-presentation to A&E in comparison to 2019 of around 11%. NHS 24 data shows a continued upward trend in referrals through the local Board flow navigation centres as the pathway becomes further embedded.

2.1.6 NHS 24 is supporting the national evaluation of the RUC pathway commissioned by Scottish Government. The evaluation is underway in terms of design and specification, with survey / engagement work with users due to commence in the near future.

2.1.7 Our Associate Medical Director (ED) is a member of Scottish Government Urgent & Unscheduled Care High Impact Changes Expert Working Group, which is evaluating and advising on national initiatives to improve USC performance. They are now a member of two SLWGs tasked with advising on the delivery of national models for:

- Call before Convey / P2P services
- Low risk Chest Pain pathways

2.1.8 The Associate Medical Director (ED) also attends SAS/NHS 24 Senior Clinical Forum. Formal QI process mapping is underway to analyse SAS 'yellow coded' calls to identify themes. Care home referral data with SAS data regarding non-conveyance rates are being looked at to identify potential themes to improve referrals. We are also evaluating the ability to capture KIS availability and assess influence on 999 referrals.

## **Mental Health Programme**

2.1.9 Recruitment for the MH Hub in Cardonald and Dundee is continuing with various routes being used to attract suitable candidates, particularly as demand for all of the MH services remains high. The PWP workforce is now at its highest level since the inception of the Mental Health Hub and recruitment

continues in line with demand. Work is underway to identify the level of service that can be provided against different levels of funding. This will be reported back to Scottish Government in due course.

- 2.1.10 The evaluation of the work with Police Scotland collaboration which ended on 8th December, is continuing, with the report anticipated for February. Discussions are also taking place through the Collaboration Strategic Steering Group on how best to continue to develop our joint programme of work. As part of the collaborative approach, it is the intention that the MH Nurse Practitioners will be involved in helping to shape Phase 1+ model and are currently assisting in the engagement and awareness raising within the three Police Scotland Service Centre sites. MH Nurse Practitioner expertise will also be used to assist in the development of further risk assessment tools and the content of training to support Service Advisors in the early transfer of MH calls. This approach will not involve any clinical assessments by the MHNPs at Police Scotland sites.
- 2.1.11 Requests from Scottish Government for additional content for both Surviving Suicide Thoughts (SST) and Mind to Mind have been received. Discussions are ongoing around funding and timescales of any new work.
- 2.1.12 The Associate Medical Director (mental health) chaired four project meetings around the Surviving Suicidal Thoughts work. Content was created to accompany two new videos, which were then published, bringing total number of videos available to the public to seven. An eighth video was shared with the Lived Experience panel for detailed feedback and a further edit has been scheduled.
- 2.1.13 The Associate Medical Director (mental health) submitted a poster for the Mental Health Leads national meeting, and attended with the Heads of Clinical Service, representing NHS 24. They also met with the Director of Mental Health and the Minister, outlining areas of NHS 24's close alignment with policy and institutional strengths and has also linked with Mental Health Unit Head of Digital and Data.

### **Forensic Medical Examinations (FME) Self Referrals**

- 2.1.14 There are a number of technical changes for the FME line that are being reviewed now the festive freeze has ended. These changes will result in small improvements to the flow of calls. Further developments may follow from the evaluation report which is being prepared now the line has been operational for over six months. This is being undertaken by the QI & Evaluation Team and is anticipated to be completed by the end of the financial year.
- 2.1.15 Monthly reports continue to be sent to SG with 41 calls received and answered to the 29th January. There were 26 records sent onto the national hub for the health boards to support the callers. The 12-week rolling total shows 143 calls answered with 103 records referred onto the hub.

## NHS Online App

2.1.16 NHS 24's new app NHS Online has gone live. The first phase of the app, which mirrors content on NHS inform, includes the five most popular self-help guides and a 'find your nearest' directory of services. The content of the app will continue to be expanded and developed, providing an additional access channel to the public of a range of services via their smartphone or tablet and all in one place.

## 3. WORKFORCE

### 3.1 Developing & empowering our workforce

#### Call Handler and Call Operator Day

3.1.1 Our second national Call Handler and call Operator Day took place in January, as due to the volume of staff-focused activities across 2022 including centre openings, 20th anniversary celebrations and awards ceremonies, we decided to hold CHD post festive. This special day highlighted and acknowledged the incredible work of our Call Handlers and Operators, providing them with an opportunity to reflect on their time with NHS 24. Activity is also used to support recruitment across the year and a national media release generated a potential partnership opportunity with NHS 24's new recruitment microsite.

3.1.2 Activity this year included video, a special edition of Team Talk, quotes and photos from our staff, senior managers, the Cabinet Secretary and a couple of Scottish celebrities. Intranet pages were viewed by more than 700 staff and Team Talk was viewed by more than 400 staff, which will increase over the coming weeks.

3.1.3 Social media published across Twitter and Facebook - one saying Thank You for the work our Call Handlers and Operators do and one with an interview from Call Handler Neil. Our Facebook posts received over 600 likes, over 70 shares, and 50 comments with messages of thanks. Our Facebook post with Neil had over 4000 views on Facebook and almost 2000 views on Twitter, and is being considered as future staff testimony for recruitment.

#### NHS 24 Induction

3.1.4 The project plan for NHS 24 Induction continues at pace, and the programme will be live for new employees at the end of Q4. The first NHS 24 Induction session takes place at Lumina on Monday 3rd April 2023. The intent of the programme is for new employees to feel professionally welcomed, suitably informed, and ultimately to begin feeling a sense of belonging with the organisation. NHS 24 Induction spans three stages for continuity and robustness:

- Stage 1 Onboarding – working with Recruitment to share key welcome and introductory information, the “keep warm” phase
- Stage 2 Induction session providing experiential insight to the service and values-based content
- Stage 3 – Local Induction (including Core Initial Training where relevant) with line manager toolkit to allow a tailored local induction appropriate to role and directorate. Guidance on regular 1:1s, with touchpoints at Months 3, 6 and 9 aligning with “stay conversations” is included, to support retention
- Stages underpinned by a Digital Handbook as a reference document, containing key information and signposting

3.1.5 Evaluation will be undertaken at various stages throughout the initial 12 months of Induction and progress updates reported through Staff Governance Committee.

### Essential Learning

3.1.6 Essential Learning compliance rate currently sits at 83.6%, a 23% improvement against baseline (60%) at 31st March 2022. The findings of a short life working group were presented to the Staff Governance Committee in February 2023. A number of recommendations were approved including the re-classification of e-learning modules and the creation of a Training Quality Assurance Committee to provide strategic oversight of e-learning modules and classifications on an ongoing basis. This committee will be established in Spring 2023.

### Internships

3.1.7 NHS 24 are working with the Robertson Trust, to support their “Journey to Success” programme. The programme is aimed at helping young people to overcome financial and social barriers to gain the university education and career they aspire to. It particularly supports those who are care experienced, young carers or those from minority ethnic groups.

3.1.8 Through the programme, NHS 24 are offering three internship opportunities in Nursing and Care. Successful applicants will complete a 6-week internship in Summer 2023, with mentor support and evaluation. Real Living Wage salary is paid directly to the individual by the Robertson Trust. The intention is for this to act as a “test of change”, and if successful, will be scaled up in the future. This work aligns with the NHS 24 Workforce Strategy and Plan 2022-2025 Strategic Priorities of providing opportunities within Early Careers, investing in strategies to open opportunities for those at different stages of their career and promoting NHS 24 as an employer of choice.

### Appraisal

3.1.9 Engagement with the full appraisal process remains challenging following the measures introduced as part of the COVID-19 response which resulted in only

one element of the appraisal process being completed rather than three. In order to address this shortfall and promote effective appraisal across the service, a revised process was approved by Staff Governance in February 2023. This proposal included a “clean slate” approach, whereby all current open appraisals will be manually closed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, bringing the organisation to a consistent fixed point. Thereafter, a staggered appraisal window approach will be implemented at set times throughout the year, cognisant of seasonal service pressures. This method enables more meaningful objectives to be set in line with organisational goals, and shared objectives.

### **Leadership and Culture Audit**

3.1.10 The Leadership and Culture Audit is complete and the draft report has been received with all findings within the Low, Medium or Advisory category. These will be jointly progressed by the Culture Change Manager when appointed, and the Internal Communications Team.

### **Middle and Senior Leadership Development Programmes**

3.1.11 A preferred supplier has been identified for both programmes through an invite to tender process. Design and build of both programmes will complete by 31<sup>st</sup> March with internal delivery to the organisation commencing in Q2. Progress and evaluation will be reported through Staff Governance Committee.

### **Recruitment**

3.1.12 NHS 24 previously advised Scottish Government that it would bring in 200 heads for its front-line services to support with winter pressures. This target has been exceeded in that 88 people in Q3 had been onboarded, have 131 new starts scheduled to join by end of March 2023 and are continuing to recruit with live adverts for all key skills.

3.1.13 NSS announced they were to make around 170 WTE contact centre staff redundant from 31/01/2023. NHS 24 engaged with NSS and agreed a fast-track recruitment process to endeavour to retain some of these staff within the NHS.

3.1.14 A new recruitment microsite launched in January 2023 to attract people from all walks of life and to position NHS 24 as an employer of choice - <https://careers.nhs24.scot/>. NHS 24 also partnered with CEMVO, a national intermediary organisation and strategic partner of the Scottish Government Equality Unit to advertise vacancies. They have a network of over 600 ethnic minority voluntary sector organisations.

3.1.15 NHS 24 have implemented an employee referral scheme for Call Handler and Call Operator roles. It is an internal recruitment method which focuses on sourcing new employees from the connections of current employees. A

referral scheme essentially cuts out the 'getting to know you' steps for both the applicant and the employer when shortlisting and interviewing staff, assuming that people who are endorsed by current employees will be of a similar nature.

## **Talent Acquisition**

3.1.16 NHS 24 successfully recruited a Manager and an Advisor role to focus on future hiring needs in terms of how NHS 24 positions itself as an employer of choice, how talent can be sourced to grow our applicant pools including targeting passive applicants whilst ensuring more cultural add/diversity are recruited to our future workforce. NHS 24 is on a new journey, moving from traditional candidate sourcing to directly sourcing candidates through use of networks, partnerships and creating talent pools.

## **Attendance Management and Health and Wellbeing**

3.1.17 The Attendance Management and Wellbeing Action Plan has been reviewed and updated and have been brought together under one plan. The focus for attendance is on support for managers in the attendance management process and the systems that support the attendance management process and for wellbeing, it will be on Mental Health Support for Staff, Financial Wellbeing and Climate Change and Sustainability.

## **Industrial Action Update**

3.1.18 The current joint industrial action group has been paused at this time pending Scottish Government and Trade Union national discussions.

# **4. SUSTAINABILITY & VALUE**

## **4.1 Delivering enhanced ICT & digital capability**

### **Respond**

4.1.1 The first phase of the rollout of Respond went live on 14th December as planned. This included Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Medico Legal. Risk which was originally planned to go live as well was delayed allowing further development work to be completed and tested. Ongoing additional support is being provided to users and feedback has been positive.

4.1.2 Implementation and training plans are being developed to provide a comprehensive approach to rollout.

### **Information Sharing with Community Pharmacy**

4.1.3 As an action from the Redesign of Urgent Care Community Pharmacy workstream, an Associate Clinical Director discussed the sharing of the NHS

24 contact record with community pharmacy with NHS 24 Clinical Development Team, and work to enable this development has started with expected implementation by beginning of March 2023. This work has been discussed with NHS Directors of Scotland Chair, Primary Care and Community Pharmacy NHS Leads Group Chair and Vice-Chair, and Community Pharmacy Scotland Executive (contractor body). All were supportive of the development and sharing NHS 24 clinical assessment information on referral to the community pharmacy and will support activity to raise awareness across the community pharmacy network ahead of implementation.

## **4.2 Continuing to strengthen NHS 24's organisational effectiveness**

### **Performance Improvement & Operational Excellence Programme**

4.2.1 We have been applying a high level of focus on the need to optimise our current service, supporting our ability to effectively and safely handle calls at the first point of contact. Looking at our ways of working from different perspectives, taking on the learning of the past quarter, a number of streams of activity have been initiated within Service Delivery focused on improving performance and how we drive operational excellence.

### **Improving how we handle the call**

4.2.2 A 'Lite Touch' training plan across the Clinical Supervisor and Senior Charge Nurse population will be completed before the end of March. This is designed to streamline the clinical supervision process to safely reduce length of interaction between call handlers and nurses with no impact to patient safety or the call outcome. Aligned to this, a subset of the Clinical Supervisor population has been selected for additional Levelling Up Training to complete by mid-March. Tactical KPI reporting has been developed to capture the impact on Average Call Handling Time of the training across this cohort of Clinical Supervisors. Five Senior Charge Nurses have been given protected coaching and development time until the end of March to support this work.

4.2.3 A second project has commenced with the objective to re-introduce the use of Advise & Refer / Advise & Discharge protocols for up to 14 different call types. This will empower our call handlers under strict clinical governance, to safely complete those calls with no or significantly reduced clinical supervision. This will have the aim of reducing the Average Call Handling Time for those call types and the intention is to re-introduce use of the highest impacting protocols before the end of March ahead of the Easter weekend.

### **Improving the patient experience when they call NHS24**

4.2.4 Further work is underway with suppliers to explore if and how 'ring back/virtual queue' technology could safely be implemented within the 111 service to



enhance the service offered to patients. There requires to be full testing and robust acceptance criteria to be met prior to implementation of this functionality into the live service. This will empower a caller to press 1 and receive a call back if they would prefer not to wait in a queue to speak to NHS 24.

- 4.2.5 The delivery of a post-call SMS which summarizes the information conveyed during a patient's call with NHS 24 was tested during the festive period and demonstrated it helped callers to understand what to expect from their call and any onward referral. This capability is being extended out to include more call outcomes.

### **Improving how we operate the service**

- 4.2.6 Defining clearly the roles and responsibilities of all members of staff in Service Delivery is a key outcome for the early part of Quarter 1 23/24. It is key that every member of staff understands the value they offer, who their manager is and what is expected of them in this role. Regular one to ones, coaching and appraisals each year are an important part of the experience of working for NHS 24 and we aim to ensure this is clear for every member of our staff.
- 4.2.7 A review of all activity including tests of change and short-term working groups has taken place. This enables us to focus on those projects and activities that support our staff and improve the performance of our service at the start of our three-year service improvement plan. Robust change management and communications methodology is key to how Service Delivery will develop and deliver services in the future.

### **Corporate Governance Framework**

- 4.2.8 The second edition of the Blueprint for Good Governance was published on 22 December 2022 and a review of the final publication was undertaken. Whilst there were no significant changes to the content of the Blueprint, there were minor changes highlighted and these will be recommended for inclusion in the next Annual Review of the Corporate Governance Framework scheduled for presentation to the NHS 24 Board in December 2023. As the Corporate Governance Framework is a 'live' document, this is continually under review and the components which make up the Corporate Governance Framework are routinely reviewed on an annual basis. The following activities will be undertaken in 2023 in preparation for the Annual Review:
- Committee Terms of Reference - These are routinely reviewed by Committees on an annual basis and will be reviewed in the February and May Committee cycles.
  - The Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference will be reviewed at its next meeting in June 2023.

- The Code of Conduct for NHS 24 Staff is currently being updated and will be approved in the May Committee cycle.

### **Estates Programme**

- 4.2.9 The relocation of the Aberdeen office, with the identification of a new site, is a priority for Estates. A project plan with indicative time scales is being developed. Ensuring clear and regular communications to all stakeholders and in particular the staff involved, is seen as crucial.
- 4.2.10 Work at Lumina was delayed due mainly to difficulties securing the materials. The office reconfiguration work is now planned to start at the beginning of February will include the renewal of the lighting. The work is anticipated to last 6 – 8 weeks.
- 4.2.11 Refurbishment work at Cardonald restrooms is expected to take approximately 6 weeks. The development of options for the redesign of the Cardonald Atrium is progressing, with work likely to start in March with planning in place to mitigate the noise risk and disruption in the live call centre. A communications plan to ensure staff are kept informed is being developed. Approval from the landlord for the works is still under negotiation.

### **Collaboration with NHS HIS Evidence Directorate**

- 4.2.12 The Associate Clinical Director and Director of Evidence (NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland) are developing an SBAR paper on collaboration between NHS HIS and NHS 24. The focus is around facilitating NHS 24 access to subject matter experts/groups/networks already linked with NHS HIS to support NHS 24's drive for providing quality assurance around the development and review of its clinical content. Next steps currently being discussed.

### **Corporate Escalation Level**

- 4.2.13 NHS 24 currently operates at Moderate level within our Corporate Escalation Framework. The Senior Management Team report a level to the EMT on a weekly basis as a way of managing specific risk indicators, threats and operational issues.

## **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.