

**NHS 24  
BOARD MEETING**

**29 FEBRUARY 2024  
ITEM 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 2023/24 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 from our 2023 Corporate Strategy. This report will provide an update on progress against that strategy to the Board.

## **2. DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE, HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES**

### **2.1 Supporting the Delivery of Urgent and Unscheduled Care**

#### **2.1.1 Winter Review**

An initial winter debrief has taken place to review the festive period. More than 50,000 calls were answered over the 8 festive days with actual activity at the lower or medium end of the planning forecast, except for Boxing Day which was significantly below forecast. This year new initiatives were implemented including:

- Virtual queue, offering patients a ring back if the length of wait was in excess of 40 minutes.
- Advise and Refer, where callers would be directed to the appropriate services swiftly, and with reduced need for clinical input.
- SMS text option for those calling with medicine related enquiries. This enabled callers to receive relevant information without the need to wait

to speak to an advisor. This was chosen by up to 10% of relevant callers across the festive period.

These new initiatives will be fully tested and embedded within Service Delivery as business as usual going forward. Lessons learned will inform future public holiday planning.

Dental performance was excellent across the festive dates. The Dental Team are measured on performance of calls to patients which have been categorised by acuity as either D1 or D3 cases. Performance of D1 category calls was 100%. Performance of D3 category calls was 99%.

Mental Health also reported a very strong performance across the period. 90%+ of calls to Mental Health Hub were answered in less than 2 minutes.

Staff experience was positive with absence levels within planned forecasting.

### 2.1.2 NHS 24 Winter Campaign 2023/24

The winter campaign ran from November 29th with media phased across all platforms until the end of January. The full evaluation, carried out by Progressive research, is due mid-February but data from the Google Ads activity and in-house social media metrics (available real time) have demonstrated an effective campaign.

Google Ads performance mirror that of previous activity with MSK related search terms performing particularly well (25.75 % click through rate)

The proactive media relations generated 66 items of press coverage secured which included 3 broadcast features and two national newspaper columns.

Social media delivered results for all seasonal messaging - NHS 24's average Facebook engagement rate across this period was 8.3% (4 times industry average). Additionally, average reach for the health sector is approximately 5% of page followers which equates to 2600 for NHS 24, but every Facebook post surpassed this figure, with the majority reaching 15,000 - 30,000.

Video production was aligned to the 111 service via an analysis of SAP keywords to identify low acuity presentations that result in self-care outcomes. Targeting these symptoms/conditions provided a focus and enabled the team to collaborate with clinicians out with NHS 24 to further reach and engagement.

#### Overview (Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn)

Interactions	17,598
Impressions	1,466,558
Items published	68
Sentiment	97% positive / 3% negative

## **Internal Communications**

Winter, particularly the festive period, is busy for NHS 24 staff. The communications team supported colleagues with extensive engagement and activity across all centres. Special editions of Team Talk, seasonal wall board messages and a daily advent calendar with festive messages for staff, as well as personalised updates for each centre were delivered. External media activity/marketing is designed to support people to manage their health and wellbeing, avoiding the need to access services ('staying well') which is aimed at helping reduce demand for our staff.

### **2.1.3 QI 24: FUNdamentals Programme**

Cohort 4 of the QI 24: FUNdamentals Programme, which ran from September to November 2023, was a 7-week course designed to equip staff with skills for Quality Improvement (QI) initiatives. The programme combined practical training with real-world application, involving bi-weekly virtual sessions and additional work on improvement projects.

It maintained high engagement with 15 staff members and overall programme evaluation was positive on a range of measures. Following the programme, the Quality Improvement & Evaluation (QIE) Team set up weekly 'QI Coaching Clinics' for ongoing support.

The Team continues to assist in developing and integrating change ideas into organisational practices, with a focus on sustainable improvement. The programme for this cohort concluded with a graduation ceremony on 21 February 2024.

### **2.1.4 Excellence in Care**

Learning from Excellence, a system for NHS 24 staff to nominate and highlight examples of excellence provided by their colleagues, went live at the beginning of November 2023 for testing in Dundee, Aberdeen, Lumina and for our Corporate staff.

To date we have had six nominations from both frontline and non-frontline staff. These staff members have received their certificate informing them of their nomination and the 'excellence' they have been nominated for will be reviewed, themed, and shared for learning within the organisation. The focus of this initiative is to identify and share learning from excellent care delivery as well as when care does not meet expected standards and learnings can be implemented.

### **2.1.5 PREVENT**

PREVENT represents a nationwide initiative aimed at assisting individuals most susceptible to grooming and radicalisation for terrorist activities. The

primary goal is to protect these individuals from becoming involved in terrorism by offering appropriate advice and support at an early stage.

It is crucial for everyone to be vigilant and recognise any changes in an individual's behaviour, such as heightened agitation, increased anger, reduced tolerance for others, alterations in appearance, the adoption of tattoos, and the use of phrases that insult people or their beliefs.

In NHS 24, the PREVENT program falls under Public Protection and is emphasised in the mandatory Public Protection E-learning modules that all staff must complete every two years.

The Public Protection Team has disseminated a 7-minute briefing to raise awareness among all staff, and an awareness session was conducted for the Senior Management Team.

Plans are underway to extend awareness sessions to staff in the Breathing Space Service and the Mental Health Hub. Given the nature of these services, which may involve longer calls with individuals, there is an increased opportunity to identify concerns and recognise signs that a patient may be at risk of being groomed.

### **2.1.6 Mental Health Programme**

The transfer of live calls from Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) to the NHS 24 Mental Health Hub successfully went live on 6 December 2023. This “warm transfer” capability was a key element in the Phase 2 collaboration work with SAS. There were 58 referrals from SAS to the Mental Health Hub during December with work ongoing between SAS and NHS 24 to build up awareness and confidence in using the pathway into the Mental Health Hub. This completes the work through this collaborative programme to develop an enhanced pathway for those in mental health distress and marks a significant milestone.

Within the pathway, the collaboration with Police Scotland continues with a steady increase now evident in the number of calls passed from Police Scotland to the Mental Health Hub. A bespoke training programme developed for Police Scotland is underway and will continue to run through to April 2024.

This training includes 600 staff in the Police Service Centres, 300 Resolution Team members and 700 Area Control Room team members. NHS 24 has seen a marked increase in Police Scotland pathway referrals since the training began. In December 2023, the Mental Health Hub answered 396 calls, an increase of 129 on the same period in 2022.

A review of the Mind-to-Mind website has been completed with updates made to multiple topics including the creation of the isolation and loneliness pages. The website structure has been redesigned to improve search engine optimisation and assist with user navigation. The usability testing has been

completed with the analysis presented to a range of stakeholders for feedback.

## **2.2 Delivering Enhanced ICT & Digital Capability**

### **2.2.1 Update on SMS E-Survey Programme**

The SMS E-survey for measuring patient satisfaction was initiated within the Dental Service in early January, with a systematic expansion of this process anticipated throughout Q4 across the 111 service. Surveying of Flow Navigation Centres and the NHS 24 Mental Health Hub began at the end of January. The implementation will be closely monitored to ensure it aligns with predefined evaluation criteria and governance procedures.

### **2.2.2 NHS 24 Online App**

An updated version of the NHS 24 Online App was released on 31 October 2023 and incorporates additional functionality including:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Self Help Guides
- Find Nearest Defibrillator (Find my nearest defibrillator functionality has also been added to the NHS24.scot website)
- 111 Call Waiting Times
- Improvements to usability identified from user feedback.

Call waiting times for 111 are being actively used by Service Delivery. With the release of the latest version of the app and website, these are displayed when relevant, such as at the completion of a self-help guide.

Work on a new version of the app is now underway. Targeting an Easter release, this update will include:

- Usability enhancements to the chatbot experience
- Improved reporting and analytics
- Design and development of an onboarding experience
- Decision support updates for eyes, headaches, and mental health signposting

### **2.2.3 NHS 24 Website**

A refreshed NHS24.Scot website was launched on 6 November 2024 [www.nhs24.scot](http://www.nhs24.scot)

This is a significant improvement on the previous site. It has an improved design, is easy to navigate, and provides an environment for future developments including personalisation of user experience and more sophisticated chatbot content related to the self-help guides.

Development work to deliver the next round of enhancements is underway with deployment scheduled for April 2024.

#### **2.2.4 Self-help Guides**

Mental Health and Wellbeing Self Help Guides have now been added to both the NHS 24 app and the nhs24.scot website.

#### **2.2.5 NHS Inform Mental Health Signposting Tool**

The Associate Medical Director (Mental Health), Communications Team and the Digital Teams implemented a third iteration of the NHS Inform Mental Health Signposting Tool which guides people to evidence-based mental health tools for sleep, anxiety, and stress. The launch of the updated tool was accompanied by a new digital marketing campaign that garnered excellent results.

The Mental Health Signposting Tool was integrated into the NHS 24 app, providing another pathway for users to access the help available.

### **3. PROVIDING A WORKPLACE IN WHICH OUR PEOPLE CAN THRIVE**

#### **3.1 Developing & Empowering our Workforce**

##### **3.1.1 Management Essentials**

Delivery of the Management Essentials Programme to all people managers up to and including Band 7 (c.230 staff) completed on 30 November 2023. Level 1 Evaluation effectiveness rating over the whole programme was 89%. An end of programme report was submitted to the December Executive Management Team (EMT) Meeting and the February Staff Governance Committee Meeting and will include Level 1-3 evaluation results received to 30 November 2023. The programme will be fully reviewed, refreshed and transition to business as usual (BAU) from Q1 2024/2025.

##### **3.1.2 Middle and Senior Leadership Development Programme**

Our first 'Leading for Impact' and 'Leading with Courage' leadership development programme workshops commenced on 16 and 25 January 2024, respectively. Six cohorts of 'Leading for Impact' and 12 cohorts of 'Leading with Courage' will be completed between January 2024 and September 2025, with staff completing these over a 6-month period. Regular updates will be provided to EMT and Staff Governance Committee through the Quarterly Workforce Report and at specific stage completions.

##### **3.1.3 iMatter**

The Health and Social Care National Experience Report 2023 was published on 28 November 2023. A comparative analysis of NHS 24's performance

against all other Health Boards was reported through EMT in January 2023 and Staff Governance Committee in February 2024.

NHS 24 was in line with the average scoring across all other NHS Scotland Boards.

#### **3.1.4 Cultural Alignment Programme**

A central Culture Action Plan has been created to monitor the progress of work contained within the Cultural Alignment Programme at a national level. At present, the plan is 21.1% complete with all actions on track.

To fully embed improvements to staff experience and workplace culture, a tailored Culture and Wellbeing Action Plan is being devised for each directorate. Working collaboratively with each directorate, these plans will be refined during Q4 and commence from Q1 in 2024/25. These directorate plans will include both national actions (such as attendance at Values and Behaviours Workshops and Appraisal completion) as well as specific local actions aimed at continuous improvement which is relevant and specific to each directorate. This approach starts to mainstream much of the culture and wellbeing work, widening impact and accountability.

A draft Culture and Wellbeing Dashboard has been developed to support the measuring of this work and allow oversight of relevant metrics at an organisational level, monitor progress, and identify emerging themes. As there are many interdependencies between work in the culture and wellbeing space, a joint dashboard is an efficient way to track the relevant KPI data for both workstreams.

#### **3.1.5 Wellbeing Strategy and Plan**

'Our Wellbeing Matters' Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2025 was approved at EMT in January 2024 and submitted to Staff Governance in February 2024 for assurance. As noted above, an integrated approach to Culture and Wellbeing is being developed and by the end of Q4, each directorate will have in place their own local and bespoke integrated Culture and Wellbeing Action Plan.

Directorates will drive delivery of their own plans with support and oversight being provided by the Culture Change Manager and Wellbeing and People Manager. Progress will be monitored through the Staff Experience Steering Group with regular progress updates provided to Staff Governance Committee.

#### **3.1.6 Mentor24**

Mentor24, our new Mentoring Programme will launch in February 2024. Our comms campaign will seek mentors and mentees from across the organisation, at every level, from every skillset. They will be given training to ensure they are confident in their role of mentor (and mentee) before being matched accordingly.

Mentor24 will provide wraparound support for the leadership development framework programmes. Uptake and success of mentoring relationships will be measured through evaluation and reported through Staff Governance Committee.

### **3.1.7 Essential Learning**

The Training Quality Assurance Committee (TQAC) have a remit to review Essential Learning annually. The annual review for 2023 was completed in December 2023. Findings and recommendations were presented to EMT and approved in January 2024 and submitted to Staff Governance in February 2024 for assurance.

A commitment has been made in the review that a benchmarking exercise will be undertaken in 2024 to ensure NHS 24 Essential Learning is commensurate (in volume and content) with other Boards across NHS Scotland.

### **3.1.8 Recruitment and Talent Acquisition**

2023 has been a remarkably busy year for the Recruitment Team. Following the completion of the Strategic Review of Recruitment (SRR), the ownership of both Call Handler and Clinical Supervisor volume recruitment moved back to Workforce at the end of August 2023 from Service Delivery.

Following this review, a new end to end process was launched to incorporate:

- the introduction of Telephone Interviews / Discussions for both skillsets conducted by the Recruitment Team.
- a refreshed Values based interview.
- interview skills training for Hiring Managers
- Recruitment Ambassadors recruited for each Regional Centre

The addition of our Talent Acquisition Team joining in February 2023 has allowed value-added activities to be organised and delivered alongside our business-as-usual activities, listening to, and responding to the needs of the organisation.

A focus has been placed on maximising our advertising opportunities and the promotion of NHS 24 as an employer brand. We have developed a Social Media approach in partnership with the Communications Team focused on the NHS 24 social platforms and new advertising routes through Total Jobs/eMed Careers sites. In line with this, we have also refreshed all new adverts in 2023



and are moving to a more digital approach with the creation of Digital Job Packs.

Over 200 individual adverts were posted, 28 open events have been held and we have attended 6 careers fairs. This has resulted in over 600 new employees onboarded to the organisation. Overall headcount continues to increase and as at the end of December 2023 we had 2074 employees. We predict that by February 2024 we will have met our target for Call Handlers of 583 WTE.

### **3.1.9 Attrition**

Attrition is currently sitting at 19.58% and voluntary attrition makes up 15.84%. The Attrition Improvement Plan continues to progress and has had a significant impact to reduce attrition down from 27%. The top reason for leaving is new employment elsewhere within NHS Scotland.

### **3.1.10 Health and Safety**

The annual health and safety audit has been completed for each site with an average score of 99.64% therefore evidencing that health and safety is being managed well across our estate. In addition, completion of the three-eLearning health and safety modules is at 90.9% which is above the target of 90%.

### **3.1.11 Attendance Management and Health & Wellbeing**

Attendance continues to be a focus for all NHS 24 cohorts. Short Term absence has increased since the previous quarter (+1.20%) however Long-Term absence has decreased (-0.08%). December 2023 absence has increased since the previous month and when compared to December 2022 this is a decrease (-0.74%). People Services continue to support managers in applying the Once for Scotland Attendance Policy and implementing reasonable adjustments to support staff in their endeavour to return to work.

Mental Health related absence continues to be one of the top 3 absence reasons. During the quarter, engagement took place with Thrive the mental health app. Given the popularity of the app the contract has been extended for a further 12 months. Thrive usage amongst our staffing group continues to rise month on month with dashboard data showing positive recoveries for staff regarding their mental health.

### **3.1.12 HR Advisory Model (3 Tier Model)**

The ticketing system (People First) continues to embed as business as usual for Workforce related enquiries. Since its launch in October 2023, the portal has received over 2000 enquiries. KPIs of response timescales and satisfaction ratings amongst users continue to be exceeded. Staff across the

Workforce Directorate meet regularly to review themes and address any areas for improvement and self-service.

Scoping work continues for the design phase of the Case Management module of People First with NSS ensuring the system requirements meet and initial KPI's developed to support the identification of trends and hotspots supporting our cultural alignment programme.

### **3.1.13 Working in Partnership**

The People Services Team worked in conjunction with Trade Union colleagues to launch the suite of Once for Scotland work life balance policies which were rolled out in November 2023.

Health Information Services have recently been through a successful organisational change exercise with People Services and Partnership colleagues working together to progress from consultation phase to business as usual. Further organisational change programmes commenced consultation to future proof the Directorates which are being supported in Partnership include ICT and Nursing Directorates.

### **3.1.14 International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare, London 2024**

Two abstracts were successful in being selected for Poster display at the prestigious International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare, London 2024. These were:

- Enhancing Public Protection Referral Processes: A Collaborative Quality Improvement Project
- Enhancing Patient Feedback Collection through SMS and e-survey

### **3.1.15 Vaccination Programme**

The Autumn/Winter 2023/24 Staff Vaccination Programme for NHS 24 concluded on the 29 November 2023. As per Scottish Government policy decision, NHS 24 staff were offered seasonal flu vaccination only, a change to previous years where the COVID-19 vaccine was also offered.

On conclusion of the staff vaccination programme, 42% of NHS 24 staff had received the Flu Vaccine either within an NHS 24 in-house vaccination clinic or elsewhere. In comparison, data for the national health care worker flu vaccine uptake, up to the 14 January 2024, is 41.7%.

Although NHS 24's in house staff vaccination programme is now complete, staff can attend the national programme for vaccination if they would still like to receive the vaccine.

<https://scotland.shinyapps.io/phs-vaccination-surveillance/>

## **4. BEING A COLLABORATIVE FORWARD-THINKING PARTNER**

### **4.1 Continuing to Strengthen NHS 24's Organisational Effectiveness**

#### **4.1.1 NHS 24 Finance Plan 2024/25**

The Scottish Government announced its 2024/25 budget on the 19 December 2023. This confirmed that there would be no uplift in budget from 2023/24, with system wide cost increases, such as medicines, supplies and energy, required to be met from efficiencies. NHS 24 has been developing a response to these wider system pressures and determining how best to continue delivering high quality, safe and effective services in this context. The finance plan is currently being developed, setting out in detail how savings can be achieved to meet the statutory responsibility of financial balance, as well as securing the investment required to transform. This has been reviewed by the Executive Management Team, Senior Management Team, and initial discussions shared with partnership colleagues in advance of a Board session on the 29 February 2024. Once this has been reviewed by Board members it shall be communicated with staff prior to submission to Scottish Government in March.

#### **4.1.2 Corporate Escalation Level**

NHS 24 currently operates at Normal level within our Corporate Escalation Framework whilst noting capacity challenges to meet demand at peak periods. The Senior Management Team discuss the level on a weekly basis as a way of managing specific risk indicators, threats, and operational issues. If deemed appropriate the Chair of SMT will escalate to the EMT.

#### **4.1.3 Relocation of Aberdeen Office**

NHS 24 has successfully completed the construction and fit out phase of the NHS 24 new premises at Forest Grove House. The new space is of high quality ensuring a comfortable day-to-day working environment and completion will enable the relocation and exit from the Emergency Care Centre.

## **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.