

NHS Recovery Plan 2021-2026

Annual Progress Update 2023

December 2023

Contents

Introduction	3
Staffing and Wellbeing	7
Primary and Community Care	9
Planned Care	11
Urgent and Unscheduled Care	14
Cancer Care	16
Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Neurodiversity, and Dementia	19
National Mission to tackle drug-related deaths	22

Introduction

Our **NHS Recovery Plan 2021-26** was published in August 2021 and set out our key ambitions and actions to be delivered over 5 years in order to address the backlog in care and drive the recovery and renewal of NHS services. We are investing £1 billion over the lifespan of the plan to support increased NHS capacity, deliver reform, and ensure everyone has the treatment they need at the right time, in the right place, and as quickly as possible,

The pandemic represented the biggest shock our NHS has faced in its 75 year existence. The “NHS Recovery Plan 2021-26” set out the actions we are committed to taking to both recover from the immediate impacts of the pandemic and lay the foundations for our long term ambitions to invest and reform our NHS.

Our comprehensive pandemic response, underpinned by the hugely successful vaccination programme, means that we are now much better placed to manage the virus and it’s impact on our health and social care services. However, we are not complacent, and our winter vaccination programme is now underway, with an increased focus on protecting those at highest risk of becoming seriously ill from flu and COVID-19.

We remain committed to delivering the NHS Recovery Plan, however it is important to recognise how much has changed since it was first published. As set out in both last year’s “NHS Recovery Plan: annual progress update” and this document, many of the commitments set out in the plan have now been delivered:

- Ongoing national and international campaigns to support the recruitment of over 800 international nurses, midwives and AHPs, as well continuing to increase the number of undergraduate medical training places, with a 100 places having been added in the academic year 2023-24
- Making progress on our commitment to increasing the number of GPs in Scotland by at least 800 by 2027; since 2017 Scotland’s GP headcount has increased by 291 to a record high of 5,209 in 2022, and there are more headcount GPs per 100,000 population in Scotland than the rest of the UK.
- Four National Treatment Centres (NTCs) are opening in this phase, which will support delivery of year on year reductions in waiting lists by providing significant new and protected capacity for orthopaedics, general surgery, ophthalmology and endoscopy. The National Eye Centre at NHS Golden Jubilee is on target to deliver more than 12,000 ophthalmology procedures in 2023-24, with NTC Fife and NTC Highland together due to deliver more than 1,800 orthopaedic procedures in this financial year.
- Ensuring patients receive the right care in the right place by optimising Flow Navigation Centres and increasing the routes for professional-to-professional advice and guidance, signposting and scheduling of appointments to A&E where possible.

- Continuing to see progress in ensuring that at least 10% of frontline health spending will be dedicated to mental health with at least 1% directed specifically to services for children and young people by the end of this parliamentary session, with expenditure rising from £1.25bn in 2020-21 to £1.3bn in 2021-22, an increase of £51.5m or 4.1% - representing 8.8% of total NHS expenditure. Expenditure on Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) rose from £88m in 2020-21 to £97.6m in 2021-22, an increase of £9.3m or 10.6% - representing 0.66% of total NHS expenditure.
- Drug-related deaths remain a real challenge in Scotland, and while we saw welcome 21% reduction in drug misuse deaths registered in Scotland in 2022 (1,051, down 279 deaths, the lowest figures since 2017), a small increase in suspected drug deaths for the first half of 2023 demonstrate that sustained progress is needed.

To build on this and support the next stage of recovery of our health and social care services, we have also set out refreshed commitments we will deliver over the coming years. “Equality, opportunity, community: New leadership - A fresh start” was published in April this year and set out the First Minister’s vision for Scotland and the outcomes he and his government aim to achieve by 2026. Alongside this, the “Programme for Government 2023/24” focusses on specific action we will be taking in the coming year.

These more recent documents build upon the “NHS Recovery Plan 2021-26” and help move us forwards from the actions we needed to take in immediate response to the issues our NHS faced as a result of the pandemic, to an increasing focus on driving longer term reform and improvement of our NHS and social care services.

We are committed to continuing with the recovery and renewal of the NHS and Social Care systems including focusing on building more sustainable health and social care services with a greater focus on primary and community health, which maximises the impact and opportunity of innovation and digital.

We will drive recovery and reform of services through the strengthened Delivery Plan Guidance with NHS Boards to plan and deliver improvements at pace and work with partners to fully integrate our health and social care services to make sure that people get the support they need, where they need it.

Within his annual report earlier this year, the Chief Medical Officer set out four population health challenges facing our population now and into the future.

First, threats from infectious diseases remain; second, life expectancy is stalling and health inequalities are widening; third, demand for and utilisation of our health and social care services continues to increase in an unsustainable way; and fourth, the climate emergency requires adaptation and is already affecting Scotland’s health and wellbeing.

We need to work across our traditional service boundaries and set out a common approach to the recovery and longer term reform of health and social care and improve the health of our nation.

Through Realistic Medicine the Chief Medical Officer sets out how we should address these challenges. Fundamentally, the services we design and deliver must be person-centred and ensure the care that people receive is what they need, without unnecessary waste and potential harm. This is about delivering care that people really value, while ensuring our resource is used in the most appropriate, sustainable and innovative way.

Our focus remains on immediate areas of recovery and improvement, but we must work with partners across Scotland to drive our preventative approach.

In the coming months, we will be working with partners across the health and social care system, Local Government and wider stakeholders, to set out our shared long term planning for population health and integrated health and social care services development.

Whilst we should not underestimate the challenges in recovering from the pandemic, our NHS has already made significant progress thanks to the hard work and dedication of staff across the NHS and our care services. Working together, we can build on the successes achieved so far to ensure that the NHS not only fully recovers from the impacts arising from Covid, but continues to adapt and reform as a modern National Health Service to meet the needs of the people of Scotland.

Recovery Plan Progress in Year Two

Staffing and Wellbeing

Our health and social care workforce is one of Scotland's biggest assets, and our highly skilled, diverse, dedicated and motivated staff have been key to both our response to the pandemic and our ongoing recovery from the subsequent impacts. We owe them not only our thanks, but to take action to **deliver improvements in planning, attracting, training, employing and nurturing the workforce, progressing towards a sustainable, skilled health and care workforce, with attractive career choices, where all are respected and valued for the work they do.**

Developing our workforce

It is important to ensure we have the right workforce in place to drive the recovery of our NHS, and that is why our plan set out a number of actions aimed at expanding the workforce, with a particular emphasis on recruiting more young people or those who might previously not considered careers in the health service.

Due to the meaningful engagement with both Agenda for Change and Junior Doctor trade unions, we have avoided any industrial action in Scotland – the only part of the UK to avoid NHS strikes. In March, all NHS Agenda for Change Trade Unions unanimously accepted the **6.5% on average 2023/24 pay offer** which has now been implemented, and in August, a record pay deal was accepted by the BMA Scotland members of a **12.4% pay uplift for 2023/24 for Junior Doctors.**

In order to invest £11 million over life of plan in national and international recruitment campaigns, funding of £8m was allocated to health boards in 2022/23 to support the recruitment of over 800 international nurses, midwives and AHPs. A further £3m has been allocated to date in 2023/24. A number of domestic events have been supported over the last 12 months, including working as NHS Scotland to promote careers at the annual Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Midwives and Royal College of Psychiatrists conferences. Further events are planned for later in 2023.

We have committed to increase the number of undergraduate medical training places by 100 per annum by 2026 and double the number of Widening Access **places**, and continue to deliver this, with a 100 places having been added in the academic year 2023-24. This included 25 'Widening Access (WA)' places, raising the total number of WA places to 115. The remaining 200 places will be allocated following a competitive bidding process.

We are continuing to provide additional training opportunities through the NHS Academy for new and existing staff in key areas of need. The NHS Scotland Academy continues to develop and deliver a broad range of bespoke training opportunities in areas including pharmacy, diagnostics, peri-operative practice and anaesthetics as well as tailored support aimed at those staff who have been recruited internationally.

As part of the NHS Scotland Academy and NES, the "NHS Scotland Youth Academy" has been established to support boards in bringing a brand-new generation into the NHS workforce, including those who may not have previously viewed the NHS as an employer of choice. The "NHS Pathway Pilot" launching this academic year will prepare and inspire

up to 80 senior phase secondary school pupils for entering careers in health and social care. In addition, the Armed Forces Talent Programme has been established to support military service leavers and veterans secure employment in NHS Scotland.

Last year the Prince's Trust and NHS Scotland Partnership supported 98 young people through the 'Get Into' and 'Get Started' programmes. In 23/24 they have committed to supporting 267 young people.

Through the Anchors programme, the workforce workstream will support health boards in recruiting and retaining a workforce that is representative of their local populations, to improve the prospects of local people. The Anchors Workforce Strategic Group workplan will draw together a wide range of strategic drivers including the National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care, the National Strategy for Economic Transformation, Tackling Child Poverty, and No One Left Behind. A key part of this work will be supporting the development of career progression opportunities for new and existing staff through earn as you learn models.

Supporting staff resilience and wellbeing

It's not only important that we have the right numbers of staff, but also to ensure that our people are well looked after and supported in their health and wellbeing at work. That is why we are committed to offering **practical support for the mental and emotional needs of the workforce**, and this year work has begun on the development of national resources for peer support and reflective practice for all health and social care staff. Funding was also made available for hot food appliances for junior doctors and a pilot of energy pods for staff to use after difficult interactions at work or long shifts to rest ahead of commuting home – all aimed at supporting our staff in their workplaces.

Our "National Wellbeing Programme" has been developed and continues to include a national wellbeing helpline, the digital national wellbeing hub, coaching for wellbeing, the workforce specialist service and psychological therapies.

We know that better staff experience means better care. The 'Once for Scotland' Workforce Policies Programme is reviewing and transforming our workforce policies to provide single, standardised policies to be used consistently and seamlessly across the NHS in Scotland. These policies and guides outline our core values and provide clear guidance on process and procedure. They have been developed in partnership with NHSScotland employers, trade unions and the Scottish Government. They are available to all staff via a digital platform and advocate a person-centred approach that aims to ensure all employees and workers are treated in a non-discriminatory, fair and consistent way.

In recognition that throughout their career, employees will face differing demands on their time and energies at home as well as at work, we have developed the national 'Supporting the Work-Life Balance' workforce policies. These policies provide staff with a range of flexible working options and support to help them to balance their lifestyle whilst maintaining and promoting the best possible service to our patients and service users. They will be published in early November 2023.

Primary and Community Care

Primary care is the first point of contact with the NHS for most people. This includes contact with community-based services provided by general practitioners (GPs), community nurses, dentists, dental nurses, optometrists, dispensing opticians, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. It can also be with allied health professionals such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists, midwives and pharmacists. The actions we are taken will **improve outcomes for people in primary and community care, through enhanced integrated multi-disciplinary teams, and better digital tools.**

Investing in Primary Care

We are making good progress on our commitment to **increasing the number of GPs in Scotland by at least 800 by 2027.** Since 2017, Scotland's GP headcount has increased by 291 to a record high of 5,209 in 2022, and there are more headcount GPs per 100,000 population in Scotland than the rest of the UK.

In 2023/24, we are providing over £2 billion to deliver and improve primary health care services in the community, enabling dental reform, provision of community pharmacy services and supporting crucial GP services through investment in multi-disciplinary teams and targeted assistance to support system sustainability. We will continue to back the crucial services that General Practices provide, supporting their work with the Primary Care Fund, and this will deliver £170 million investment in multi-disciplinary teams and enable the development and expansion of Community Treatment and Care (CTAC) services.

Effective Digital Tools

"Hospital at Home" is a targeted intervention that provides a level of acute hospital care in an individual's own home, or homely setting that is equivalent to that provided within a hospital and plays a key role in freeing up acute hospital capacity and allows people to be treated in their own home where clinically appropriate. To support the wider programme, a digital Hospital at Home workstream has been established and workplan agreed. This is delivering:

- Digital Best Practice, to ensure teams have the right equipment and skills for mobile working
- Core Digital Systems, to ensure team members can access an appropriate electronic patient record and share data between systems.
- Remote Consultations, to embed the use of remote consultations by both phone and Near Me where appropriate for the patient and their condition.
- Remote Monitoring, to enhance patient safety and ensure timely interventions if required.

One of the responses in the pandemic aimed at accessing healthcare more safely was the greater use of online tools. As we recover from the pandemic we are committed to continuing to ensure that video-based access via the “Near Me” service a choice available for all appropriate appointments and services across health and care. To date over 2 million video consultations have taken place with an estimated saving of 64 million miles of travel. With support for Group Consultation now embedded with the application, over 9,000 group sessions have been held, with around 42,000 participants.

Work had already been well established in Scotland allowing people to be able to feed in their blood pressure from home via a locally managed SMS text service and our Remote Health Pathways Programme, “Connect Me” is building this further using a nationally procured asynchronous monitoring platform enabling access via auto telephone, on-line app or SMS. The Primary care hypertension management programme has now reached over 82,000 people with an estimated saving of over 270,000 face to face appointments. For every 50,000 people routinely monitoring their blood pressure can result in the avoidance of up to 745 Strokes and 500 heart attacks over a 5-year period. Connect Me supports several other key health conditions or services across Primary and Secondary care such as heart failure, respiratory, prostate cancer and waiting list triage.

A 'digital front door' describes a secure digital app which provides a streamlined approach to how people navigate their way through services, as well as self-manage, and access and contribute to their own health and care information. We are undertaking public engagement and consultation on a multi-channel approach for Digital Front Door by the end of this Parliament. Initial engagement is underway with key stakeholders including a citizen panel that will inform developments, including consultation requirements.

Dentistry, Optometry and Hearing Services

We have **removed NHS Dental Charges** for anyone aged under 26 from August 2021, and for all young people between 18 and 25 years of age, for courses of treatment started on or after 24 August 2021, NHS dental charges are to be remitted. We remain committed to **increasing patient access to NHS dental services**, and while NHS dental activity nationally has continued to increase since September 2022, we recognise that much more needs to be done in some areas. The implementation of a new payment reform model is underway and will both preserve the position of NHS dentistry and safeguard levels of access.

We are committed to increasing the number of patients who can be cared for at their local community optometry practice rather than in the hospital as part of a new NHS Community Glaucoma Service. Rollout of the Community Glaucoma Service has begun in some areas of NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, with the aim of further expansion by 2025/26.

We are further developing our community hearing services and have provided Community Hearing grant funding to the RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People) ‘Near You’ pilot scheme to support local services in early detection and prevention of hearing loss, hearing aid repairs and a national directory providing information to service users.

Planned Care

Covid had a significant and ongoing impact on the health service, notably in the area of planned care. We remain committed to reducing backlogs, delivering year on year reductions in waiting lists, and continue to take action to make sure we can deliver the care needed. This will be **supported alternative models of care, efficiencies, regional and national working and through the new National Treatment Centres (NTCs) in NHS Highland, NHS Forth Valley, NHS Golden Jubilee and NHS Fife.**

Increasing capacity

The Recovery Plan set out our intention to **increase inpatient/day case procedures by 55,500 by 2025/26**, which represents a 20% increase over pre-Covid levels. In the past year we have seen a further increase in the level of activity for these procedures, with the latest quarter (to June 2023) showing activity for inpatient/day-case at the highest level since the start of the pandemic; the sixth quarterly increase in a row with 58,813 patients seen in (up 2.1% on the previous quarter and up 17.9% compared to the same quarter last year).

Alongside this, we are **committed to increasing outpatient capacity by 140,000 by 2025/26**, a 10% increase over pre-Covid levels. To date, significant progress to release outpatient activity through redesign has been made, with over 100,000 appointments released through active clinical triage (SCRT) and patient-initiated review (PIR), well ahead of the target of 50,000 for 2023/24.

In order to increase diagnostic procedures by 78,000 in 2022/23, moving up to 90,000 per year from 2025/26, we continue to support a mobile operating theatre (£1.8m) based in Stracathro in 2023-24, which provides additional planned care surgeries for Tayside and Grampian patients. To support diagnostic imaging capacity, we provided funding for 7 MRI and 3 CT scanners, providing additional scanning capacity over seven days per week and capacity for 12,000 additional procedures per year.

Three of the CT scanners are now permanent NHS assets providing core capacity within Boards. One further CT and two MRI mobile scanners will provide additional capacity during 2023/24 and will help people get diagnostic tests they need and additional activity throughout the week including weekends, such as weekend Endoscopy sessions, will help reduce diagnostic waits. Finally, we have provided £1.8m to fund a new national digital dermatology programme to help speed up treatment and reduce waiting lists, potentially reducing demand for outpatient dermatology appointments by up to 50 per cent.

National Treatment Centres

We are making good progress on the creation of a network of National Treatment Centres for planned elective procedures and diagnostics. Four National Treatment Centres (NTCs) are opening in this phase, with two already operational from the spring. The four NTCs will support delivery of year on year reductions in waiting lists by providing significant new and protected capacity for orthopaedics, general surgery, ophthalmology and endoscopy. The four new centres will provide eight orthopaedic theatres; an inpatient/day-case ward; three endoscopy rooms and two general theatres.

- The “National Eye Centre at NHS Golden Jubilee” which opened in December 2020 delivers over 12,000 cataract procedures annually.
- “NTC Fife” and “NTC Highland” are planning to deliver over 1,800 additional orthopaedic procedures this year.
- “NTC Forth Valley” and the second phase of the NHS Golden Jubilee will open shortly, adding further general surgery, orthopaedic and endoscopy to reduce waiting lists.

Improving services

The NHS Scotland Centre for Sustainable Delivery (CfSD) is a national unit designed to sustainably improve and transform Scotland's health care system through innovation, collaboration and clinical leadership, and helps drive recovery through working with clinicians to implement improvements to care pathways across Scotland.

In the past year, the Centre has continued to work with our NHS Boards to introduce new ways of delivering care that will create additional capacity for inpatient, day case and outpatients. Its Modernising Patient Pathways and Scottish Access Collaborative programmes have developed strong clinically-led Specialty Delivery Groups, which promote multidisciplinary team working and local adoption of service improvement programmes. These groups are now well established and have supported several new and innovative pathway developments, many of which are now being successfully scaled up across Scotland.

Since 2021 we have invested £8.6 million in CfSD programmes to support transformation programmes and the rapid rollout of new techniques, innovations and safe, fast and efficient pathways for Scotland's patients, including:

- The Detect Cancer Early Programme, including a national lung cancer campaign, with 64% of those who have seen the campaign taking action as a result.
- Once for Scotland pathways including Active Clinical Referral Triage, Discharge Patient Initiated Reviews and Enhanced Recovery After Surgery
- The Accelerated National Innovation Adoption pathway, including Cytosponge, which delivered 3,903 procedures across all mainland NHS Boards; and digital dermatology, which delivered 4,600 virtual Outpatient appointments.

- The National Green Theatres Program, which aims to cut the high emissions and waste typically generated in surgery while maintaining the highest levels of patient safety and quality of care through measures such as removing anaesthetic gases from the supply chain and moving away from single use instruments/consumables.

CfSD established a National Elective Coordination Unit (NECU) in July 2022. The NECU works with NHS Scotland Health boards collaboratively to maximise capacity and provide centralised, coordinated and innovative approaches to waiting times recovery. In its first 12 months, NECU has supported 39 nationally coordinated capacity campaigns across 10 health boards, which supports and promotes the utilisation of capacity. Through matching clinical teams and patients it ensures timely and person-centred care and has resulted in an additional 3,245 patients being treated.

NECU have implemented innovative and nationally coordinated work that ensures greater optimisation of waiting lists within NHS Scotland, reducing wasted appointments and supporting NHS Scotland Health boards to identify patients who still require to be seen and/or treated. Through a digital-first and *Once for Scotland* approach, NECU have validated over 52,000 patients nationally and identified over 4,500 appointment slots that can now be allocated to patients.¹

Waiting Times Guidance Review

We have reviewed the Planned Care Waiting Times Guidance and a revised version has now been published. This guidance will ensure that patients continue to be managed fairly and consistently across Scotland. In addition to working with Health Boards across Scotland, a Gathering Views exercise, completed by Health Improvement Scotland (HIS), allowed patient's to feedback on the proposed policy changes. All of the changes made also align to our commitment to deliver sustained improvements and year-on-year reduction of Waiting Times through service redesign, as well as enhancing regional and national working.

¹ The 2022/23 Annual Report on NECU can be accessed at [national-elective-coordination-unit-annual-report-2022-2023.pdf \(nhscfsd.co.uk\)](https://www.nhscfsd.co.uk/national-elective-coordination-unit-annual-report-2022-2023.pdf)

Urgent and Unscheduled Care

We remain committed to delivering sustainable improvement to A&E waiting times however despite a significant focus on maximising our NHS capacity, performance remains below the expected level. Scotland's core A&Es have been best performing in the UK for 8 years and in the latest month (August 23) were 8.8 percentage points higher than England. This shows the challenges we are experiencing are similar across the country.

Our Urgent Care Collaborative approach

We are seeing improvements through our Unscheduled Care Collaborative approach, which is being driven forward by the Centre for Sustainable Delivery (CfSD) where they are working with NHS Boards to develop local which focus on 5 key recovery areas:

- Improving urgent care pathways in the community and improving links across primary and secondary care.
- Ensuring patients receive the right care in the right place by optimising Flow Navigation Centres and increasing the routes for professional-to-professional advice and guidance, signposting and scheduling of appointments to A&E where possible.
- Improving access to Hospital at Home services by supporting Boards and partnerships to adopt evidence-based best practice.
- Optimising assessment and care in our Emergency Departments by improving access to 'same day' services, the use of early and effective triage, rapid decision-making and streaming to assessment areas.
- Reducing the time people need to spend in hospital by promoting early and effective discharge planning and robust and responsive operational management.

Innovative approaches to Urgent and Unscheduled Care

Avoiding the need to attend A&E is frequently better for people who need urgent treatment, and therefore we are committed to providing alternative to A&E attendance. The Redesign of Urgent Care worked across organisations and multi-disciplinary teams to develop an alternative to unnecessary attendances at A&E for those who self-present. Offering a route for sign-posting and redirection, NHS24-111 service offers rapid clinical triage directing patients to the most appropriate care. Flow Navigation Centres have been established which offer rapid access to clinical assessment either virtually or in person and scheduled, as far as possible. Throughout the year we have been focussing on enhancing access the interface between professionals across the system such as those working in care home or the Scottish Ambulance Service to further prevent unnecessary attendance to A&E.

The combination of services has significantly contributed to reduced attendance, with **self-presentations during the latest 12 months (up to August 23) at Emergency Departments down by over 92,000 (around 11%) compared to pre-Covid levels.** NHS 24 have undertaken significant recruitment and planning which has seen an improvement in call answering time which means patients are getting the care they need quickly and safely.

NHS 24 helps to ensure that patients are directed to the most appropriate source of support as quickly as possible and manage referral to local services within NHS Boards where needed, and the Recovery Plan supports improved NHS 24 call handling times. NHS 24's planned recruitment aim of 200 new staff by the end of March 2023 has been exceeded, with over 250 new staff members recruited. Its rolling recruitment programme continues, and includes call handlers, clinical supervisors, MH practitioners, and Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners.

NHS 24 have also been holding open recruitment events to promote their current clinical and call handler vacancies, with a longer-term view to successful recruitment and retention of high-calibre candidates. These events have had a very positive reception and the Service reports that they have successfully recruited candidates via engagement which in turn, supports improved call handling times for the Service.

We are supporting our ambulance service through enhancing our Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) specialist practitioner workforce. The SAS Integrated Clinical Hub is embedded as part of the chain of response to calls from 999 and NHS 24, and SAS are optimising its clinical and operational effectiveness.

We are continuing to manage ongoing pressures on acute care by expanding our Virtual Capacity across the country exceeding our commitment to increase bed capacity by 150 beds per day. Over 2023/24 we are investing over £15 million towards maximising our Hospital at Home capacity Throughout the year we have been focussing on expanding virtual capacity across Hospital at Home Older People; Respiratory Rapid Response Pathway; and Out-patient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy (OPAT). Heart Failure and Paediatric pathways will come on stream this winter (23/24).

Through the Hospital at Home Older People's service, between April and June 2023 we provided acute level care at home to nearly 3,500 people, avoiding an admission to an acute hospital ward - this is a 34% increase on the same period last year. On average, Hospital at Home is the busiest geriatric medicine ward in Scotland with an average of 265 patients a day with a maximum of 296 patients managed on the busiest day.

Cancer Care

Cancer remains a top priority for NHS Scotland, and we are committed to ensuring those with a suspicion of cancer are seen and treated as quickly as possible to reduce patient anxiety, improve experience and meet cancer waiting times standards. The actions we have undertaken will **improve cancer outcomes through better prevention and diagnostics, including expanded Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Services.**

Improving Cancer Services

As reported in last year's progress report, we published a refreshed Framework for Effective Cancer Management in December 2021. The Framework provides NHS Cancer Teams with the tools to effectively manage patients from the point of referral to first treatment, to improve patient experience as well as cancer waiting times performance. Further to the refreshed framework, we have now published a 'Once for Scotland Effective Breach Analysis' for cancer teams across NHS Scotland to develop a local process to follow. If a cancer patient breaches cancer waiting times standards it is crucial that the journey is analysed to ensure- lessons learned and future breaches can be avoided.

We have also published '*Urgent Suspicion of Cancer: National regrading guidance* to ensure Urgent Suspicion of Cancer (USC) referrals can be directed appropriately. It is intended to encourage cancer teams to triage referrals using a specialist tool, Active Clinical Referral Triage (ACRT), ensuring patients are on the right pathway at the right time.

We continue to work closely with Cancer Management Teams across Scotland to fully embed the Framework for Effective Cancer Management and provide hands-on tailored support to cancer services across Scotland, helping share best practice where identified.

A progress report on the National Cancer Plan was published in August 2022, with detailed progress of the actions, with the majority delivered or met in part. The Plan came to an end in March 2023, and the final report is due to be published in Autumn 2023. Of the 68 actions, 47 were delivered, 9 met in part and 12 remain in progress.

Delivered actions include:

- Rollout of the Transforming Cancer Care (TCC) programme across Scotland, in partnership with Macmillan.
- Completion of the Maggie's "Prehabilitation" pilot and launch of the "Prehabilitation for Scotland" website.
- Publication of guidance for the safe delivery of systemic anti-cancer therapy (SACT, and expansion of the delivery of oral SACT.
- Delivery of innovative solutions, such as increased use of Near Me, a video consulting service; Non-Medical Prescribing (NMP); Connect Me, offering various

services for patients to communicate with healthcare professionals; and upscaling of Colon Capsule Endoscopy (CCE).

- Ongoing review and publication of Cancer Quality Performance Indicators (QPIs).
- Publication of the Equity in Screening Strategy and action plan in July 2023.

Those actions that were not delivered in full continue under the new Cancer strategy 2023 to 2033 published in June 2023.

We also continue to support the Detect Cancer Earlier (DCE) Programme with a new earlier diagnosis vision for Scotland, which sets the direction for the Programme over the coming years with an ambition to reduce later stage disease by 18% in year 10. A key plank of this is the new behaviour change campaign - '*Be the Early Bird*' which launched in March 2023. The multi-media campaign included TV, radio, social media PR and press case studies and a 15 day roadshow, targeting areas of deprivation. Evaluation is underway and will inform the campaign re-run in September 2023 encouraging those aged 40 and above who may be worried about unusual persistent symptoms to let their GP practice know.

We committed to establishing a network of Early Cancer Diagnostic Centres, which are now known as Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Services (RCDS's). The University of Strathclyde published an interim report on Scotland's first three Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Services in November 2022 which showed that more than 12% of patients cared for by one of Scotland's three Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Services received a cancer diagnosis, with a further 33.8% receiving a diagnosis of a non-cancerous health issue, and reported positive patient experience using the services. Following this, two more RCDSs have since been established in 2023 in NHS Borders and NHS Lanarkshire, and a final two year evaluation report is due in November 2023 which will help inform wider roll-out, ensuring patients with non-specific symptoms suspicious of cancer have access to a diagnostic pathway from primary care.

We are ensuring that all cancer centres in Scotland with the most up-to-date radiotherapy equipment, and our ongoing replacement programme continues to ensure that patients attending the 5 radiotherapy centres in Scotland benefit from modern technology and treatments. The Technical Specification and Evaluation Group oversees all replacements to ensure we plan for the future and embrace opportunities for collaboration in procurement to maximise public value for these cost effective treatments. Greater provision of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) in radiotherapy also continues to be pursued for all cancer treatment centres, and the planned investment in this programme is essential to meet increasing demand, increasing complexity, and to facilitate more personalised radiotherapy treatment in the future.

We are also continuing to improve access to the best treatments and care for rarer cancers with funding of £653,000 over two years for the Pancreatic and Hepatocellular Cancer Pathway Improvement Project, and an evaluation of its effectiveness will be undertaken by the end of this year, comparing patients who have been referred through the improved pathway compared to patients before the project and those current patients who have not been referred through the pathway.

Support for people with Cancer

We **continue our pioneering partnership with MacMillan**, and annual funding to support the Scottish Government partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support has been agreed to March 2032. Health and Social Care Partnerships in Scotland have agreed to the '*Improving the Cancer Journey*' (ICJ) model, which means that Scotland is now the first country in the UK where all cancer patients will have access to a key support worker to receive dedicated financial, practical and emotional support.

“Prehabilitation” is a term used to cover support for actively improving physical and mental wellbeing for those diagnosed with cancer. Our commitment to develop a ‘prehabilitation’ programme for cancer patients is progressing through a pilot programme 'Prehabilitation for cancer patients', which involved over 1,522 people affected by cancer. Based on the success of this pilot, as part of our new cancer strategy, further funding to March 2024 has been provided to the cancer charity 'Maggie's' to extend and embed their universal prehabilitation programme in each of the 8 Maggie's centres in Scotland. Supporting the concept of rehabilitation, *the Nutrition Framework for People Affected by Cancer* was published and made available online in November 2022, an implementation of this framework has been carried forward into the new cancer strategy.

We are continuing with our pilots to provide cancer patients a “single point of contact” to support them throughout their treatment and funding is in place to support 12 pilot projects under the new cancer strategy. Early indications are that the pilots are impacting positively on both patient experience and clinical workload, with a formal evaluation and options of how to potentially scale up these pilots under consideration.

Mental Health, Dementia, Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity

The pandemic presented particular challenges for mental health, with an increased demand for services. As we progress through our Recovery Plan, we remain committed to delivering **improved mental health and wellbeing support in a wide range of settings with reduced waiting times for Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and distress and ongoing implementation of our suicide prevention strategy.**

Investing in our Mental Health Services and Workforce

We are continuing to see progress in ensuring that **at least 10% of frontline health spending will be dedicated to mental health with at least 1% directed specifically to services for children and young people by the end of this parliamentary session.**

NHS Mental Health expenditure rose from £1.25bn in 2020-21 to £1.3bn in 2021-22, an increase of £51.5m or 4.1% - representing 8.8% of total NHS expenditure. Expenditure on Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) rose from £88m in 2020-21 to £97.6m in 2021-22, an increase of £9.3m or 10.6% - representing 0.66% of total NHS expenditure.

We continue to make progress in funding around 320 additional staff in CAMHS over the next 5 years, with the potential to increase capacity for CAMHS cases by over 10,000. The latest figures available for March 2023 show an increase of 148 whole time equivalent staff within CAMHS services as compared to March 2022.

Improving Access to Services

The pandemic resulted in significant impacts on children and adolescents mental health (CAMHS) resulting in increased demand for services, which has been maintained over the past year. We continue to work towards our target of 90% of people referred to CAMHS and Psychological Therapies being seen within 18 weeks, and we have seen significant improvements in waiting lists over the past year. Between June 2022 and June 2023 there has been an 85% decrease in the number of people waiting for longer than a year for CAMHS, and a 54% decrease in those waiting longer than a year for psychological therapies. As we continue to make progress and waiting list backlogs are tackled, we expect this activity to be reflected in improved performance, with all NHS Boards working towards meeting the 90% waiting times standard.

Eliminating long waits for CAMHS and Psychological Therapies is also challenging, but progress continues. By the end of June 2023, 10 of 14 CAMHS services had effectively eliminated their long waits. In 2021-22 we allocated nearly £40m additional funding to NHS Boards to improve CAMHS, which included £4.25m specifically for clearing backlogs. In 2022-23 we allocated a further £36.7m, followed by a further £48.6 million in 2023-24 via the *Mental Health Outcomes Framework* to improve the quality and delivery of mental health and psychological services for all. We continue to provide targeted, tailored support towards those Boards with the longest waits.

We continue to expand the use of digital mental health services and lock in new service innovations that have delivered good outcomes for people and ensured continuity of service provision. We have nationally rolled out two digital therapies, Sleepio and Daylight, which people can access without needing a referral from a mental health professional and are running pilots on the use of these digital therapies in prisons and for children and young people. We are also piloting the use of cross-border group therapies using video conferencing, allowing people to access group mental health sessions with people beyond their own NHS Board. This will help to reduce stigma and improve access for people in rural communities who may not have large numbers of support, or who are unable to access group therapies in person.

We published an ambitious new “Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan” with COSLA in September 2022, supported by record funding to double the annual budget to £2.8 million by 2025-2026. A new partnership is driving delivery of this plan, with expertise and leadership from Samaritans Scotland, the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH), Change Mental Health, Penumbra and Public Health Scotland.

Driving improvement

As part of our work to develop a set of quality standards for all Adult Mental Health services so that people know what they can expect from their NHS services, we have developed *Core Mental Health Standards* which are based on the draft quality standards for adult secondary services. We ran a public consultation on the draft standards for adult secondary services and received strong support for the content of the standards as well as widening the scope of the standards beyond adult secondary. We have refined the standards and expanded their remit based on the consultation results and plan to publish the final standards in Autumn 2023.

We have also established the *Mental Health Standards Implementation Advisory Group* which includes representatives from the mental health workforce, services providers and people with lived experience. This group will inform our approach to implementing the standards."

Our work to transform the integration of mental health within the unscheduled care setting by enhancing pathways for mental health presentations has continued to progress with investment from the Scottish Government supporting NHS 24's Mental Health Hub to continue to increase its workforce capacity. This has allowed waiting times for support to reduce from 10 mins on average in July 2022 to 5 minutes on average in July 2023. The Mental Health Hub continues to operate a 24/7 compassionate national service and is staffed by Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners who triage people using a psychosocial assessment to either help manage their needs or direct them to the most appropriate form of support such as their GP, community psychiatric nurse, the 999 service or local emergency department.

In addition, 13 Health Board areas are providing local clinical support to Police Scotland and the number of Health Boards offering this clinical support to the Scottish Ambulance Service has increased over the last year, with 11 Health Board areas now providing this support. This allows first responders to provide improved care, closer to home, without the need to convey an individual to the emergency department.

Dementia, Learning Disabilities and Neurodiversity

We **continue to support the needs of people with dementia to live well, including post diagnostic support** through investment of over £6m in 2021-22 and 2022-23 in Post-Diagnosis Support for dementia, and further investment will be made this year. This ring-fenced funding highlights our commitment to improving support and we are working with Integration Joint Boards to understand the impact of this additional investment. This will inform our approach in 2024/25 as new national dementia strategy goes into delivery. We have also provided £1m to Age Scotland over 2 years to provide complementary community-based post-diagnostic support aimed at keeping people active and connected in their local communities.

To develop our work on mental health and adult neurodevelopmental pathways to support people with a learning disability, autism and ADHD, pilot work was undertaken which recommended the establishment of Health and Social Care Partnership networks and further work to address constraints around workforce, primary care and resources. Work to develop an action plan has started through a partnership with the *National Autism Implementation Team*.

National Mission to tackle drug-related deaths

Whilst drug-related deaths remain a real challenge in Scotland, 2022 saw a 21% reduction on 2021. The change between 2021 and 2022 is the largest year on year decrease on record, and the lowest figure since 2017. However, suspected drug deaths for the first half of 2023 increased slightly, and we remain absolutely committed to **reducing drug deaths. We are also supporting Glasgow HSCP to establish the UK's first safer drug consumption facility.**

Our National Mission on Drugs

A key plank of our national mission on drugs is **the implementation of new Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards for people who use drugs** to support the consistent delivery of safe, accessible, high-quality drug treatment in Scotland. Public Health Scotland (PHS) published a report in June 2023 showing that, of the 10 MAT Standards, most local areas had fully implemented Standards 1 to 5 by April 2023 and that most areas had partially implemented Standards 6- 10. The report showed significant progress had been made but more improvement is required in some local areas

Our NHS Recovery Plan committed to ensure there are sufficient outreach facilities, programmes and residential rehabilitation in place for people who use drugs, and referrals to residential rehabilitation continue to increase and the aim to be providing 1000 publicly-funded placements per year in expanded capacity by the end of the Parliament remains on-track. Outreach initiatives are in place in most local areas now as part of MAT standard 3 and non-fatal overdose pathways continue to grow, often delivered through the Scottish Ambulance Service.

The past year has seen key actions undertaken as part of our “National Mission on drugs”, including:

- Continued to expand Residential Rehab.
- Provided £15m a year funding to community and grass-roots organisations that supported over 300 projects across Scotland, including 48 projects in the most recent funding round.
- Improving person-centred support for people who present with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues.
- Working to support Glasgow HSCP to establish the UK's first Safer Drug Consumption Facility following the Lord Advocate's position – although this would be made far easier if the UK Government would use its powers to support this initiative.
- Established the National Collaborative, who are developing a Charter of Rights for people who use drugs to increase accountability, monitoring, and challenge, in the context of the forthcoming Human Rights Bill.

- Published our response to the Drug Death Taskforce Report, detailing over 80 actions, supported by significant new spending commitments of over £68m for the remainder of this parliament.



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