



# Delivering what matters to our community

Year 2 – 2025/26





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# Welcome from our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chair

We are very proud of our dedicated staff – **Team Orkney** – who work hard and do their best every day to look after our community and provide excellent care and services.

Over the past 12 months we have spent considerable time and energy reconnecting with our patients, community and staff – and building meaningful relationships which are grounded in being open and honest.

We made a commitment when we launched our new Corporate Strategy in 2024 to do all we can to bring it to life in everything we do. In doing so, it has become our ‘compass’, it guides all of our decisions, and it is becoming embedded in everything we do.

There are many regional and national requirements and standards that determine our priorities. These can be found on pages 6, 7 and 8. However, as important as these are, our local priorities are determined by what matters most to our local community and the priorities detailed in this document achieve this, following several months of engagement with our patients, community, partners and staff.

In Year 1 (2024/25) we published how we did against the priorities we set at the end of each quarter. Our Year 2 priorities build on our progress in Year 1 and set out the highest priorities for us that will ensure we make year-on-year improvements that take us closer to achieving our promise to you - our community, and to Team Orkney, based on what is realistic and deliverable within the resources and capacity we have.

We will continue to measure our progress and publish regular updates as part of our commitment and will be consistently open and transparent in doing so, including when it comes to describing our challenges and our responses to these.

We will continue to be unrelenting in our pursuit of becoming a continuously improving and learning organisation, recognising these two features are central to our success and recognising we still have some way to go.

This is a five-year strategy (2024-2028) and 2025/26 marks Year 2 of our journey in pursuit of our goals.

We each consider it a privilege to lead this organisation and to work alongside such dedicated and committed colleagues to deliver on our promise and make NHS Orkney the great place to live and work that we know it can be.



# National, regional and local context

With circa 800 staff and serving a population of over 22,000, with a further population increase anticipated in the years to come, NHS Orkney is the smallest Territorial Health Board in Scotland, made up of 70 islands of which 20 are inhabited, with approximately a third of our population living on ferry-linked isles.

Whilst the smallest Health Board, NHS Orkney has big potential to be the leading provider of remote and rural healthcare with so much going for it. We provide a comprehensive range of primary, community-based and acute services.

NHS Orkney is experiencing many of the service pressures facing the rest of the NHS in Scotland, including unacceptably long waits in planned care in many services. We also have some unique challenges, including an ageing population, our geography, transport and accommodation which we are grappling with and working proactively to find solutions to. On the flip side, Orkney also has the longest healthy lifespan of anywhere in Scotland, some of the lowest rates of heart disease and an incredible community with a spirit that is unrivalled. It is important to build on our community's strengths whilst we strive for our own improvements.

NHS Orkney, as part of NHS Scotland, is one of 14 Territorial Health Boards in Scotland.

## National

The vision nationally is a Scotland where people live longer, healthier and fulfilling lives – spanning access, prevention, quality of care and people and place.

The national priorities set out by the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary, which apply to all Health Boards, including NHS Orkney are really clear and include:

1. Further reducing waiting times – including working to eliminate all waits over 52 weeks by March 2026
2. Reducing Delayed Transfers of Care, which means patients who are in hospital who are medically safe to transfer (home or to another care setting)
3. Path to financial balance and sustainability – ensuring that Boards have deliverable and credible plans which sets out over the coming three years our path to balance.
4. Further digitising and improving productivity and efficiency (reducing unwarranted variation)
5. Shifting the balance of care from hospital (acute) to community
6. Collaborative and optimal working between NHS Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships and cross boundary working between Boards and across Scotland
7. Leadership which is system and solutions focussed and driven by hope and optimism

At the centre of responding to our challenges and priority areas is leaders working across our system to influence change and improvements and working collaboratively and across boundaries for the benefit of our patients and community we serve.

The challenges are such on health and social care that Reform is required which will be focused around five guiding principles:

- Prevention first
- People first
- Community first
- Digital first
- Planning for the population

It is our job at NHS Orkney to consider the local Reform opportunities to us, which in simple terms means how we can explore different ways of working with our spectrum of partners that will not only further deepen partnership working arrangements but consider different ways of working that could further improve health outcomes and services for our patients, efficiency and the sustainability of public services in Orkney, and ensure the very best use of our collective resources and assets.



## Regional

The North of Scotland Region covers 70% of the landmass of Scotland yet is home to only 26% of the population. This creates challenges for the delivery and accessibility of services.

Whilst population changes are being experienced across Scotland, most remote and rural communities in the North have proportionally more people aged 65 and over, including Orkney, where a quarter of our population are over 65 (compared to 20% national average), and where it is predicted that half of our population will be over 65 by 2037.

An ageing population has well-known implications for health and care service demand due to higher rates of chronic and long-term conditions, including conditions such as diabetes, heart, musculo-skeletal and respiratory disease.



The five North Health Boards are: NHS Orkney, NHS Shetland, NHS Tayside, NHS Grampian and NHS Highland.

Collaboration and cross-boundary working is all the more important for the North, to ensure we maximise the use of the resources we have available to build more sustainable, value-based healthcare whilst staying connected to our unique local communities and populations we serve.

Other cross-boundary services exist within Service Level Agreements (SLAs) between island Boards, including NHS Orkney, and other specialist centres, in our case mostly at NHS Grampian, NHS Highland and Golden Jubilee. We are working hard to further strengthen relationships and governance between Boards we rely on to ensure our patients receive timely care. There is also a shift to more population-based planning in this regional space.

In addition to demographic challenges experienced in the North of Scotland, other key challenges are:

- Workforce sustainability
- Travel
- Housing
- Funding
- Capital and infrastructure
- Fragile clinical and corporate services at risk of unsustainability

## Local context – disease burden and health trends

### Obesity

- 75% of Orkney adults overweight/obese (65% Scotland average)
- 31.6% of Primary 1 children are at risk of being overweight/obese

### Health inequalities

- 16.33% of population living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile 2

### Mental health and wellbeing

- Rising rates of anxiety/depression – timely access to services a system priority

### Dentistry

- New models of care are being explored with focus on ‘grow your own’ and training based in Orkney – to address recruitment challenges
- Orkney children have lowest rates of tooth decay in Scotland
- Restorative dentistry, orthodontics and oral and maxillofacial surgery – all back up running

### Delayed Transfers of Care

- Often high numbers of delays, above our agreed maximum numbers, where the biggest pressure is on residential placements due to capacity challenges
- Hospital bed occupancy fluctuates between 82-95%

### Fuel poverty

- 31% of the population in Orkney are in fuel poverty and 22% are in extreme fuel poverty



# Orkney's challenges

- A fragile but stabilising organisation
- Our geography presents unique challenges:
  - Delays, discharge arrangements and packages of care to ferry-linked isles
  - Recruitment challenges – including our senior medical workforce (30% of senior medical workforce are locum/agency staff – impacting our financial challenge)
  - Models of delivery which are unaffordable and often disconnected
  - Limited availability of wider services, including Pharmacy & Optometry
- Planned care wait times for majority of specialties dependent on other Health Boards (NHS Grampian, NHS Highland and NHS Golden Jubilee) with strong partnerships in place
- Strong reliance on neighbouring Boards for specialist services/visiting consultants
- Limited availability of rented and new housing/accommodation
- Increasing patient travel costs
- Nursing home capacity in Orkney
- Many single points of competence
- Achieving financial sustainability – we are escalated to Level 3 of the NHS Scotland Support and Intervention Framework for our finances. We have an organisation-wide efficiency programme called Improving Together, an Improvement Board and a Financial Escalation Board in place to ensure oversight of progress against our financial and savings plans.



# Orkney's opportunities

## New Hospital – focus on transformation and changing models of care to ensure we have a sustainable future

- Commissioned external clinical service review, with Scottish Government support
- Lead role in Remote, Rural and Island sustainability and future model review
- Organisation-wide transformation programme in place
- Right-sizing our workforce and agreeing our Clinical Strategy, based on what is affordable
- Service Level Agreement review - cross-boundary collaboration with other Health Boards

## Integrated Governance

- Streamlining/decluttering the current landscape
- Strengthening and speeding up local-decision making
- More responsive governance arrangements to local context (Once for Scotland/central approach isn't always helpful for an Island Board when it comes to addressing local challenges and the needs of our community)

## Local Reform opportunities

- Exploring opportunities to further improve outcomes and services for our community, create sustainable public sector services/improve efficiency through different ways of working, and maximise the use of our collective resources and assets

## Transport investments to improve access for our community

- Ferry replacement
- Third inter-isles plane
- Much-improved relationships with Loganair

## Right-sizing the system to 'future proof'

- Options appraisal taking into account future demographics and shifts in balance of care between acute and community
- Nursing home capacity is needed
- Step-up, step-down capacity/Frailty Model to respond to the needs of our population

## Island Games 2025 – Orkney is hosting

- Celebration of sports and island communities
- 24 island groups from across the world competing in 12 sports; 2,500-3,000 visitors expected
- Collaboration, recruitment and legacy opportunities

**There are some other themes from feedback we receive on a regular basis that point to where further improvements are necessary, which includes:**

1. How we manage demand, activity and productivity
2. Better integration of primary care and secondary care
3. Improving outpatient productivity and efficiency
4. Improving the interface of Orkney Health and Care and NHS Orkney so that those staff who work between the Council and NHS have a better experience at work and feel better supported, valued and a sense of 'belonging'
5. Closer working between clinical and corporate teams

# Our journey of improvement

Our journey of improvement was kick-started in April 2023.

Over the last 2-years, many important foundations have been laid at NHS Orkney to ensure we can deliver much-needed sustainable change and continuous improvement. At the heart of this has been reconnecting with Team Orkney and our community to build trusted and strengthened relationships based on openness and transparency.

The foundations now in place which will support sustainable improvement include:

- **Improving our culture** – a strong focus on visible and compassionate leadership, staff wellbeing and value and recognition, responding to feedback and creating a strong safety and speak up culture
- **Stability of leadership** – close to a fully substantive Executive Team and acting on the recommendations in an external review report into cultural development, governance and senior leadership (December 2024)
- **Operational and financial grip and control** – clear ways in which we hold to account for delivery of performance improvements, including our Improvement Board, Senior Leadership Team, Planned Care Programme Board and Performance Review Meetings underpinned by improved data and benchmarking, including our Integrated Performance Report
- Strengthened approach to governance and risk management in the organisation

We have listened carefully to all of the feedback we received through the engagement period in recent months so we have a richer understanding of what matters most to our community and what would make the experience of working here a better one.

In this document we set out how we have listened and will act on your vital feedback in the year to come (Year 2 – 2025/26).

## Our strategy – connecting with our community

Our strategy is underpinned by our commitment to delivering excellent care and services to our community.

We will do this by connecting with our community and ensuring our values are at the heart of everything we do.

## Our promise to our community

Looking after our community and providing excellent care.

## Values

Our values, aligned to those of NHS Scotland, are:

- Open and honest
- Respect
- Kindness

Underpinning these core values is 'Team Orkney' – which is our circa 800 staff who work together every day, and evidence teamwork, in the pursuit of our goals and delivery of our promise. Team Orkney are based at The Balfour, in our community and on our ferry-linked isles.

During our engagement on the development of our Year 2 priorities, we heard consistently that our staff do incredible things every single day so many examples of staff going above and beyond and delivering excellent care for our patients and community.



# Strategic objectives

We have 5 strategic objectives:

- 1. Place**  
By 2028 we will: be a key partner in leading the delivery of place-based care which improves health outcomes and reduces health inequalities for our community
- 2. People**  
By 2028 we will: ensure NHS Orkney is a great place to work
- 3. Patient safety, quality and experience**  
By 2028 we will: consistently deliver safe and high quality care to our community

- 4. Performance**  
By 2028 we will: within our budget, ensure our patients receive timely and equitable access to care and services and use our resources effectively
- 5. Potential**  
By 2028 we will: ensure innovation, transformation, education and learning are at the forefront of our continuous improvement

Each strategic objective has an Executive Director Lead (see page 16 onwards).



# What's most important to our community

Based on the feedback we have received from our patients, community, staff and partners via multiple routes, including an online survey – these are the main areas where people want to see NHS Orkney focus and make improvements:

## Place

- Population Health and prevention driving all improvement and being integrated with mainstream business
- Emphasise prevention of ill health and empower the community to maintain their own health and wellbeing
- Recognising that NHS Orkney is more than just The Balfour by celebrating the great work taking place in the community and on our ferry-linked isles

## People

- Improving staff health and wellbeing and morale by looking at career paths to allow staff without formal qualifications to advance themselves and better serve the organisation and public
- Develop a transparent, equitable and welcoming accommodation policy for new staff

## Patient Safety, Quality and Experience

- Hear more from clinical leaders as to how they lead, inspire and support their staff

## Performance

- Improving waiting times and access to services i.e. dentistry, ophthalmology, physiotherapy, mental health, outpatients, pain service and self-referral to these services
- Improving planned care performance, improving clinical quality and safety (including clinical governance) and optimising/stabilising our current resources
- Outpatient clinic efficiency, pain service, patients experiencing long waits
- New models of care
- Improve access to Social Care, Homecare, Residential Care
- Working with our community to reduce travel for appointments that could be done virtually

## Potential

- Improve communication through more effective use of digital, for example SMS or email appointment reminders





# Our priorities for 2025/26 (Year 2)

Strategic objective	Executive lead	Priorities for 2025/26		What we will do in 2025/26
Place	Director of Public Health	1	Improve people's physical, mental health and wellbeing by prioritising prevention and early intervention for smoking, obesity and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve our weight management pathways and increase smoking cessation referrals by 5% from 98 in 2023/24</li> <li>Launch a new sexual health and bloodborne virus network to drive activity to improve sexual health care, reduce sexually transmitted infections and help achieve viral hepatitis and HIV transmission elimination goals</li> <li>Introduce the new childhood vaccination schedule with a new routine appointment for children aged 18 months to improve protection from preventable illness</li> </ul>
		2	Progress our ambition to become a Population Health organisation and system by putting prevention and early intervention at the core of what we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with our partners to implement the new population health framework which will help streamline and co-ordinate system-wide activity</li> <li>As new models of care are identified prevention will be integrated by embedding referral pathways and social prescribing opportunities to support individuals to improve their health</li> <li>Contribute to the legacy of the Island Games, including by promoting recruitment opportunities and further improving people's health and wellbeing</li> </ul>
		3	Explore local reform opportunities to further improve services and outcomes for patients and our community and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will actively participate in Public Sector Reform</li> <li>Develop a business case for the future MRI Service so that we have a long-term sustainable solution for our community</li> </ul>
People	Director of People and Culture	4	Launch a new overarching experience programme which includes new behavioural standards to bring our values to life and ensures patient, staff and community feedback drives continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a medium-term workforce plan to support the attraction, retention and development of our people</li> <li>Launch, embed and evaluate new behavioural standards following engagement with our community and staff to underpin our values</li> <li>Develop a new approach to how we listen and respond to patient, community and staff feedback to inform service improvements throughout the year</li> <li>Further improve our overall staff engagement score in the iMatter(staff) survey from 75-77</li> </ul>
		5	Drive a step change in appraisal, mandatory training and sickness absence rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure our staff sickness rates are consistently below the national NHS Scotland average of 5.5% and ensure long-term sickness is below 3%</li> <li>Improve compliance with our statutory/mandatory training rates to &gt;80%</li> <li>Improve appraisal rates from 36% to &gt;60%</li> </ul>
		6	Launch our new leadership development programme and approach to succession planning for the Executive Team, Senior Leadership Team and the Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch new leadership and manager development programmes</li> <li>20 staff will have completed and lead a change management project following completion of Quality Improvement (QI) training</li> </ul>
Patient Safety, Quality and Experience	Medical Director	7	Embed a consistent, proportionate approach to risk management, and further strengthen our governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete an operational governance review which reduces duplication of papers, information and attendance at meetings and ensure respecting our governance is part of our Board development programme</li> </ul>
		8	Foster a culture of safety, learning, and openness, encouraging staff to speak up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the number of staff feeling able to raise safety concerns from 74-80% in iMatter (staff) survey</li> <li>Improve the number of staff feeling confident concerns will be followed-up when they speak up from 66-70% in iMatter (staff) survey</li> <li>Improve timeliness and learning from Significant Adverse Event Reviews</li> </ul>
		9	Ensure the clinical voice drives safety and improvement changes, across our hospital and community services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch and evidence the impact of our new approach to clinical engagement across the organisation</li> <li>Relaunch and evaluate our Clinical Advisory Groups to ensure the clinical voice is central to improvement, patient safety and change</li> </ul>

# Our priorities for 2025/26 (Year 2) continued

Strategic objective	Executive lead	Priorities for 2025/26		What we will do in 2025/26
Performance	Director of Nursing, Midwifery, AHP's and Chief Officer Acute Services	10	Deliver our 2025/26 financial plan and continue our path to de-escalation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue our path to de-escalation from level 3 of the NHS Scotland Support and Intervention Framework</li> <li>Deliver our 2025/26 financial plan with a year end deficit of £5.2m</li> <li>Achieve £3.5m savings target</li> <li>Achieve 3% recurrent savings for the second year running</li> </ul>
		11	Further improve access and reduce waiting times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act on feedback from patients to further improve access to the following services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mental Health</li> <li>Dentistry</li> <li>Neurodiversity</li> <li>Outpatients</li> <li>Primary Care</li> </ul> </li> <li>Explore transformational opportunities to further reduce waiting lists in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orthopaedics</li> <li>Ophthalmology</li> <li>Pain service</li> <li>Ear, Nose and Throat</li> <li>Endoscopy</li> <li>Podiatry</li> <li>Speech and Language Therapy</li> <li>Physiotherapy</li> <li>Dietetics</li> <li>Oral Surgery</li> </ul> </li> <li>Increase the number of patients treated in our theatres by 10%</li> <li>Increase virtual appointments by 5%</li> <li>Achieve the Scottish Government target of zero patients waiting no longer than 52-weeks for treatment in hospital and the community</li> </ul>
		12	Further improve the discharge experience for our patients particularly those living on our ferry-linked isles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further reduce complaints related to discharge experience, particularly for patients living on our ferry-linked isles</li> <li>Build on the work delivered in 2024/25 to further improve the number of people who are discharged before 12-noon to more than 25%, 7-days a week</li> <li>Reduce the number of Delayed Transfers of Care per week to below 6</li> </ul>
Potential	Chief Executive	13	Accelerate digital transformation, and introduce a new model for how we deliver Digital Services for our patients, community and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New model of service delivery for Digital Services</li> <li>MORSE Community Electronic Patient Record rolled-out to the following community based services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health Visiting/School Nursing</li> <li>Physiotherapy</li> <li>Community Nursing</li> </ul> </li> <li>Introduce text message reminders for outpatients</li> </ul>
		14	Set out a clear ambition for education, training and improvement – underpinned by an integrated Education Strategy and new on-site Education and Improvement Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch a new Education Strategy for all staff groups</li> <li>Open our new Education and Improvement Centre</li> </ul>
		15	Revisit and refresh our Clinical Strategy which will redefine NHS Orkney, determine transformation opportunities and create more sustainable services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete and act on the recommendations of the external clinical services review to identify opportunities to re-design and transform our clinical services</li> </ul>

