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Chief Social Work Officers
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Chairs, NHS
Chief Executives, NHS
Directors of Human Resources, NHS
Directors of Finance, NHS
Nurse Directors, NHS

By email

Dear colleagues,

Winter Planning for Health and Social Care

We are writing to confirm a range of measures and new investment being put into place nationally to help protect health and social care services over the winter period and to provide longer term improvement in service capacity across our health and social care systems.

This new investment of more than £300 million in recurring funding, as set out by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care in Parliament today (05 October 2021), is a direct response to the intense winter planning and systems pressures work that has taken place over recent weeks with stakeholders, including with health boards, local authorities, integration authorities, trade unions and non-affiliated staff-side representatives.

All of our winter planning preparations are predicated on four key principles:

1. *Maximising capacity* – through investment in new staffing, resources, facilities and services.



2. *Ensuring staff wellbeing* – ensuring that they can continue to work safely and effectively with appropriate guidance and line-management and access to timely physical, practical and emotional wellbeing support.
3. *Ensuring system flow* – through taking specific interventions now to improve planned discharge from hospital, social work assessment, provide intermediary care and increase access to care in a range of community settings to ensure that people are cared for as close to home as possible.
4. *Improving outcomes* – through our collective investment in people, capacity and systems to deliver the right care in the right setting.

Collectively, these principles are designed to ensure the action we take now has a lasting and sustainable impact. We are not just planning to build resilience in our health and social care systems to see us through this winter; we are also building on the approach to recovery and renewal set out in the NHS Recovery Plan and through our continued efforts to improve social care support.

It is understood that collectively we continue to face significant demand across services and that current pressures are likely to further intensify over the winter period. We are grateful to you and your colleagues across the NHS, social work and social care who are working tirelessly to help us navigate through the on-going pandemic and to manage current demands.

You will already be aware that the NHS in Scotland will remain on an emergency footing until 31 March 2022. In connection with this, we are actively examining how we manage the volume of work connected with staff governance, staff experience and some on-going programmes of work over the winter period. This may include temporarily slowing or suspending some programmes – but this does not mean that the Scottish Government is no longer committed to completing those programmes. We are particularly mindful of the pressure on employer and staff time and wish to engage with you on how we manage work programmes that are not directly related to relieving winter service pressures, to enable us to support the objectives of maximising capacity and supporting staff wellbeing and, at the same time, progressing other Ministerial priorities.

The suite of new measures, and the actions now required of health boards, and in partnership with integration authorities and Local Authorities, is supported by significant new recurring investment. Further specific information on allocations to be made to individual areas will be provided to NHS Directors of Finance and IJB Chief Finance Officers in the coming days. Further discussions on Local Authority distribution mechanisms will take place urgently.

It is critical that we continue to work together to make progress at pace and we would like to offer our sincere thanks in advance for your collective efforts in implementing the suite of measures set out immediately below.

Multi-Disciplinary Working, including the recruitment of 1,000 Health and Care Support Staff

We are providing recurring funding to support the strengthening of Multi-Disciplinary Working across the health and social care system to support discharge from hospital and to ensure that people can be cared for as close to home as possible, reducing avoidable admissions to hospital. This includes up to £15 million for recruitment of support staff and £20 million to enhance Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) this year and recurring.

These MDTs should support with social work and care assessment, hospital-to-home and rapid response in the community. MDTs may encompass:

- Integrated assessment teams to discharge people from hospital with care and support in place, working in partnership with unpaid carers;
- Enabling additional resources for social work to support complex assessments, reviews and rehabilitation, as well as AWI work;
- Ensuring that people at home or in care homes have the most effective care and that care is responsive to changing needs;
- Rapid-response community MDTs to facilitate diversion away from GPs, Out of Hours services (OOH) and the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) into the community; and,
- Scaling up Hospital at Home to prevent or avoid admissions.

To further support this work, we are asking territorial health boards to recruit 1,000 new health care support workers, with a specific focus on Agenda for Change bands 3 and 4, immediately, to provide additional capacity across a variety of services both in the community and in hospital settings. Boards are also able to recruit to new band 2 roles in acute settings and to support progression of existing staff into promoted posts. These roles will support hospital services as well as support social care teams to enable discharge from hospital. Boards are asked to recruit staff to assist with the national programme of significantly reducing the number of delayed discharges.

It is essential that all of this increases capacity within local community systems and we are mindful that recruitment may inadvertently move staff from other sectors including Care at Home services and care homes. Decisions – including the decision to recruit new staff to MDTs – should be made in active consultation with H&SCP Oversight Groups, which have been stood up to manage community demand and the deployment of resources.

Boards should note that there will be a national recruitment campaign for social work and social care which will link in with activity being undertaken by Local Authorities.

Full details of the expected volume of staffing that each territorial board is expected to recruit, is set out at Annex A. It is expected that recruitment activity should be commenced immediately.

The Scottish Government has already provided £1 million of funding in-year across NHS Scotland to build capacity within recruitment teams and national health boards have offered to provide mutual-aid to territorial boards to manage new volume recruitment. Health boards have the flexibility to use recruitment agencies to assist with any aspect of the recruitment process.

NES has offered support with training and upskilling including residential fast-track induction in partnership with GJNH. This can take the form of developing 'Once for Scotland' induction and statutory and mandatory training at pace to allow mutual aid between boards on statutory and mandatory training and potential centrally coordinated Hub and Spoke training provision where boards would find this helpful.

Providing interim care

£40 million for 2021/22, and £20 million for 2022/23 has been provided to enable patients currently in hospital to move into care homes and other community settings, on an interim basis, to ensure they can complete their recovery in an appropriate setting. This is likely to be for a period of up to six weeks through an expedited process. Local teams will work with people and their families to explore options, maintaining choice and control. Multi-disciplinary teams will provide support to people in these interim settings to ensure they receive high quality, responsive healthcare and rehabilitation. Consent will, of course, be sought before discharge from hospital and safe clinical pathways, aligned with public health advice and guidance must be adhered to. Any placement is expected to be in their immediate locality or other suitable location. There will be no financial liability for the individual or their family towards the costs of the care home.

The offer of an interim placement should be made when the HSCP are unable to provide an appropriate care at home package immediately, or when the first choice care home is temporarily unavailable. A clear care plan for this period of interim care needs to be in place, with an agreed date for the placement to end, set out before the placement begins.

Expanding Care at Home capacity

£62 million for 2021/22, has been allocated for building capacity in care at home community-based services. This recurring funding should help to fulfil unmet need, and deal with the current surge in demand and complexity of individual needs, also helping to ease pressures on unpaid carers.

Therefore, this funding should be spent on:

- i. **Expanding existing services**, by recruiting internal staff; providing long-term security to existing staff; Enabling additional resources for social work to support complex assessments, reviews and rehabilitation; commissioning additional hours of care; commissioning other necessary supports depending on assessed need; enabling unpaid carers to have breaks.
- ii. **Funding a range of approaches to preventing care needs from escalating**, such as intermediate care, rehabilitation or re-enablement and enhanced MDT support to people who have both health and social care needs living in their own homes or in a care home.
- iii. **Technology-Enabled Care (TEC)**, equipment and adaptations, which can contribute significantly to the streamlining of service responses and pathways, and support wider agendas.

Social Care Pay Uplift

Up to £48 million of funding will be made available to enable employers to update the hourly rate of Adult Social Care Staff offering direct care. The funding will enable an increase from at least £9.50 per hour to at least £10.02 per hour, which will take effect from 1st December 2021. This funding is critical to support retaining and recruiting staff in the sector and to alleviate the immediate pressures in Social Care and NHS/ Community based health services.

COVID-19 Financial Support for Social Care Providers

The Scottish Government will continue to fund additional COVID-19 costs relating to remobilisation and adhering to public health measures, and the Social Care Staff Support Fund, until 31 March 2022. From 1 November 2021, the non-delivery of care and under-occupancy elements of financial support will only be available in exceptional circumstances where services are impacted for a sustained period due to COVID-19 outbreaks or following COVID-19 related Public Health guidance.

Nationally Coordinated Recruitment in Specialist Areas of Need

We know there are specific workforce shortages where Boards individually have struggled to achieve the numbers of workforce that they need. The Scottish Government is already providing marketing support for a nationally coordinated recruitment campaign for six Health Boards to deliver more midwives, predicated on a model developed for the nationally coordinated recruitment earlier this year of public health consultants, which was very successful.

In addition to this, we will make available national marketing support for Band 5 recruitment across the Health Boards. In particular, we will take forward a marketing campaign for Band 5 nurses working in community health and social care. We will request shortly from you the number of vacancies you aim to fill and will work with you to agree the next stages of this process.

We have also approved funding to extend the my jobs Scotland recruitment website until March 2022 to all third and independent sector organisations, which will mean that all social care vacancies can be advertised at no additional cost to providers on one platform. We will be running a national marketing campaign to attract more people to the sector, focusing on social media, working with schools and colleges and linking to the work we're doing with the SSSC and NES on career pathways and learning and development.

International Recruitment

We know international recruitment is a useful lever to alleviate pressures and as such are supporting Boards to increase the use of international recruitment through a number of measures. The Scottish Government has provided new recurring funding of £1 million to develop capacity within recruitment teams to support international recruitment. A readiness checklist for international recruitment has also been shared with boards to allow self-assessment and identification of priority areas for action.

The development of partnerships with a range of agencies such as Yeovil District Hospital Trust has been established to build a pipeline supply of international staff. A Memorandum of Understanding is available for use by Boards to engage the services of Yeovil District Hospital Trust. We now require that Boards nationally work towards the recruitment of at least 200 registered nurses from overseas by March 2022.

To support this, in year funding of £4.5 million has been identified to offset direct recruitment costs and can be used to support prospective candidates, including the provision of temporary accommodation for incoming recruits, and other reasonable out-of-pocket expenses.

We are also establishing OSCE training provision and training support in Scotland which will offer a comprehensive training programme either directly to Boards or as facility to train local trainers to prepare candidates to sit their OSCE exam to gain NMC registration. This will expedite the process of gaining NMC registration and significantly reduce the burden of training and preparing a candidate to Boards.

In addition, we are establishing the NHS Scotland Centre for Workforce Supply based in NES to identify further labour markets, build relationships with a range of recruitment agencies, promote the use in Scotland of Government to Government agreements for international recruitment and support Boards and candidates where appropriate with on-boarding.

We will make contact with Board HR teams in the coming weeks to receive an update on the use of the funding provided and the plan to accelerate readiness to commence international recruitment.

Professional Regulators' Emergency Covid-19 Registers

The Scottish Government's chief health professions officers, including the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer and Chief Pharmaceutical Officer wrote on 27 September to remaining registrants on the professional regulators' emergency Covid-19 registers. This communication encourages registrants to apply for vacancies on the NHS Scotland Jobs website and, where relevant, to consider returning to service via Board staff banks.

This communication has been issued in anticipation of further challenges in the upcoming winter months, to encourage experienced professionals to return and support services in their area of expertise.

We hope that this approach of directing emergency registrants to live vacancies will attract suitable candidates to professional opportunities, based on your current and future staffing needs. Boards are asked to consider how retirees might be flexibly deployed. Many are unlikely to be able to return to full-time work, but can be deployed on a part-time basis, or via Board staff banks across areas of need.

Healthcare Students

The utilisation of the skills and experience of healthcare students has been an important step in addressing some of the workforce challenges. Whilst the Scottish Government does not believe it is appropriate to disrupt healthcare students' programmes through authorising full-time student deployment at this time, we do believe the deployment of healthcare students (apart from dental students) in appropriate part-time support roles will be beneficial to support boards' workforce capacity.

A national offer via an open letter has been made to healthcare students – including nursing, midwifery, AHP students and undergraduate medics – through their colleges and universities signposting them to the availability of 3 or 6 month Less Than Full Time Fixed Term Contracts (LTFTFTC), with their nearest health board.

A Director's Letter, reaffirming the policy arrangements set out in the Director's Letter 02/2021 will be issued and will provide further detail on the employment and deployment of students.

Wellbeing

Of significant importance is the wellbeing of our health and social care workforce, wherever they work, and this remains a key priority. We are working to ensure that the right level of support is offered across the system.

We are actively listening to colleagues to understand where the pressures are and what actions can be taken to mitigate the resulting impact on staff. Now, more than ever, it is critical that staff look after staff wellbeing and take the rest breaks and leave to which they are entitled, as well as being given time to access national and local wellbeing resources at work.

We are committed to ensuring we collectively provide the strategic leadership and oversight of staff wellbeing. An immediate priority is to address people's basic practical and emotional needs, and we are also developing further practical support measures and additional resources for Boards as you respond to winter pressures.

In support of that ongoing engagement, £4 million is being made available in this financial year to help staff with practical needs over the winter, such as access to hot drinks, food and other measures to aid access to rest and recuperation, as well as additional psychological support. £2 million of this funding will be made available immediately, with the remainder being allocated following the conclusion of ongoing discussions with staff-side representatives and employers to understand how the investment can best support staff welfare needs.

Finally, we appreciate the pressure our services are facing and once again reiterate our gratitude for the hard work and dedication of all our colleagues across the health and social care sector for all they do to support us through this challenging period.

Yours sincerely,

John Burns
Chief Operating Officer,
NHS Scotland

Donna Bell
Director of Mental Wellbeing
and Social Care

Annex A

Volume of Staffing – NRAC Share

Allocations by Territorial Board 2021-22		
	Target share	NRAC Share
NHS Ayrshire and Arran	7.38%	74
NHS Borders	2.13%	21
NHS Dumfries and Galloway	2.99%	30
NHS Fife	6.81%	68
NHS Forth Valley	5.45%	54
NHS Grampian	9.74%	97
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde	22.21%	222
NHS Highland	6.59%	66
NHS Lanarkshire	12.27%	123
NHS Lothian	14.97%	150
NHS Orkney	0.50%	5
NHS Shetland	0.49%	5
NHS Tayside	7.81%	78
NHS Western Isles	0.67%	7