



**Chief Executive's Report
3 August 2023 Board Meeting
Professor Caroline Hiscox**



Purpose of this report

This report updates Board members on priority issues since the last Board meeting which are not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

1. Industrial Action

The industrial action by junior doctors was suspended on Friday 7 July to allow the BMA to ballot their members on a new pay offer. I would like to express my gratitude to our junior doctors for their constructive approach during our local planning phase and emphasise again that I appreciate that the decision to take industrial action is not an easy one and that I do respect the right to take action. I am relieved that the inevitable disruption has been averted. I am also grateful for the huge amount of hard work in recent weeks by colleagues across the whole system to plan mitigations for the disruption industrial action would have brought. We will review the process and outcomes of the planning that was done and learn lessons for preparing for system disruption in the future.

I am very pleased to report that all the patients who were either not booked in for the proposed strike days or who were cancelled have been re-booked – over 4000 out-patient appointments and 328 in patient appointments. This was a huge and rapid undertaking and I would like to thank our acute services administrative team who responded magnificently and contacted as many patients as possible in a very short timescale to minimise the impact on them. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the system-wide working group who navigated the situation early and effectively to ensure as little disruption as possible was felt. Thank you.

2. Innovation

NHS Grampian continues to be at the forefront in several areas of healthcare innovation, and we are being recognised nationally for this work. Our own Innovation Hub – the first in Scotland – started in 2016.

Our breast cancer research team recently received the National Institute for Health Research's CREST Award, recognising the surgical team that have made the greatest contribution to clinical trials research across the UK during the last year.

The breast screening team is also the first in the UK to use AI in real time to detect additional cancers, and this project is now being rolled out in other screening sites across Scotland. The team has plans to expand the use of AI in breast ultrasound, thermal imaging and contrast enhanced mammography.

NHS Grampian also has the largest adaptive radiotherapy treatment capacity in the UK, with a second machine operational from July 2023, and we are the first centre in the UK to treat head and neck cancer using this technique.

These innovations benefit patients by providing faster, accurate diagnosis and treatment reducing side-effects and they are also important in helping us attract staff who want to be part of the innovation being pursued in Grampian.

Board members will have the opportunity at the seminar in September to learn more about these exciting developments and our collaborations with University of Aberdeen and other partners.

3. Planning for winter

One of the key reflections from the Winter Debrief 2022/23 was the need to ensure that plans for Winter for 23-24 are developed as early as possible and staff across the system are aware of their responsibilities. We also know that it is essential to plan for winter as a whole system, and reflect the fact that the system is inter-connected - if roads and paths are not gritted this will result in high ED attendances, more orthopaedic cases, increased social care demands and potential for delayed discharges.

We have therefore agreed a new approach to planning for winter 2023/24, working with partners to create a single Grampian plan to try and ensure that the population here feels well-supported, well-equipped and well-prepared. A programme of work has commenced which aims to produce a Grampian-wide Contingency Plan and which will be taken to the Board when finalised in the autumn.

4. Laundry

Following the installation of a new hydraulic press in the Laundry, there was an isolated asbestos incident. A small number of staff and contractors were present at the time and they have all been identified and supported.

The Linen team has responded exceptionally well since the incident occurred on the weekend of 8/9 July, supported by colleagues from Decontamination, Logistics, Maintenance, Business Services and others. Many of the Linen team are working extra hours and in limited safe spaces to sort clean linen for delivery to wards and used linen for laundering in other NHS boards and in commercial laundries. The level of teamwork is fantastic and everyone is focused on maintaining the service while the reopening of our own laundry progresses.

5. Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC)

RAAC is a type of lightweight concrete, commonly used in building projects from the 1950s to the 1990s. There are some concerns about its durability, especially if it sustains water damage or if there were problems with its original fabrication.

We, along with all NHS boards, were asked by NHS Scotland Assure to carry out a desktop survey of our buildings, using their age and type of construction as a guide. We will be requesting more detailed surveys in 54 buildings – or parts of buildings. We do not need the teams in these buildings to do anything different at present; we are awaiting confirmation of the survey timeline and we will share this when it is available.

6. Intensive Care Neonatal unit

On 25 July Scottish Government announced three specialist intensive care neonatal units for babies born at highest risk will be based in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Care for babies born at less than 27 weeks, lighter than 800 grams or who need complex life support will be provided by Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) at Aberdeen Maternity Unit, Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and Queen Elizabeth University Hospital. The new model of neonatal intensive care was recommended by the Best Start Report and is based on evidence that care for babies at highest risk is safest in units which can treat a high volume of patients.

Professor Caroline Hiscox, Chief Executive
28 July 2023