

NHS WESTERN ISLES

BOARD MEETING

Meeting date: 26th June 2025

Item: 10.1

Title: Workforce Report April 2025

Responsible Executive/Non-Executive: Diane Macdonald, Director of HR and Workforce Development

Report Author: Diane Macdonald, Director of HR and Workforce Development

1 Purpose

Please select one item in each section

This is presented to Committee Members for:

Assurance	X
Awareness	
Decision	
Discussion	

This report relates to a:

Annual Operating / Delivery Plan	X
Emerging issue	
Government policy/directive	
Legal requirement	
Local policy	
NHS Board / Integration Joint Board Strategy or Direction	

This aligns to the following NHSScotland quality ambition(s):

Safe	X
Effective	
Person Centred	

Please select the level of assurance you feel this report provides to the Board / Committee and briefly explain why:

Significant	X
Moderate	
Limited	
None	
Not yet assessed	
Comment	
Specify:	

Please indicate which of the Boards Priorities the paper relates to:

Financial Sustainability / Recovery Plan	
Capital	
Hospital Based Services Model – Rural General Hospital / Community	
Workforce Health & Wellbeing	
Health Inequalities	
Sustainability of Community Health & Social Care Model	
Primary Care Transformation Programme	
Digital Transformation / Digital Health	
Public Protection Priorities	
Women and Children's Services	
Climate Emergency and Sustainability	
Other – please explain	
Comments:	

The report is directly linked to a Recovery Driver(s) within the Annual Delivery Plan:

RD01	Primary & Community Care - Improved access to primary and community care to enable earlier intervention and more care to be delivered in the community.	
RD02	Urgent & Unscheduled Care – Access to urgent and unscheduled care, including scaling of integrated frailty services to reduce admissions to hospital.	
RD03	Mental Health - Improve the delivery of mental health support and services, reflecting key priorities set out in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.	
RD04	Planned Care - Recovering and improving the delivery of planned care.	
RD05	Cancer Care - Delivering the National Cancer Action Plan (Spring 2023-2026).	
RD06	Health Inequalities and Population Health - Enhance planning and delivery of the approach to tackling health inequalities and improving population health.	
RD07	Women and Children's Health - Take forward the actions in the Women's Health Plan and support good child and maternal health, so that all children in Scotland can have the best possible start in life.	
RD08	Workforce - Implementation of the Workforce Strategy.	X
RD09	Digital Services Innovation Adoption - Optimise use of digital & data technologies in the design and delivery of health and care services for improved patient access and fast track the national adoption of proven innovations which could have a transformative impact on efficient and patient outcomes.	
RD10	Climate - Climate Emergency and Environment.	
RD11	Finance & Sustainability – Approach to achieving financial balance and aligning with S&V financial improvement programme of work.	
RD12	Value Based Health & Care – Approach to embracing and adopting Value Based Health and Care.	
RD13	Integration & population Need – Boards are asked to set out the key actions to respond to population needs and how you will work in partnership to address and respond to these needs.	
RD14	Regional & National – Approach to working regionally and nationally across services through collective and collaborative approaches to planning and delivery, where required.	
	None of the above	

This aligns to the following NHS Western Isles Corporate Objective(s):

CO1	To provide person-centred care, focusing on the evidence based health needs of our increasingly diverse population, identifying and taking every opportunity to improve our patients' health, experience and outcomes	
CO2	To protect individuals from avoidable harm to continually assessing and managing risk, learning, and improving the reliability and safety in everything we do.	X
CO3	To champion efficiency and effectiveness in our services that delivers minimum possible waiting times.	
CO4	To pro-actively stimulate and intensify our research and application of effective innovation to improve how we care for patients today and into the future.	
CO5	To promote and support people to live longer healthier lives	
CO6	To specifically target early years, health inequalities, vulnerable and underrepresented and more difficult to engage with groups.	
CO7	To continually improve and modernise our integrated healthcare services and assurance systems.	
CO8	To value, support the wellbeing of, and develop and sustain a compassionate, confident, competent, flexible and responsive workforce.	X
CO9	To deliver our commitment to partnership working to deliver national standards, targets and guarantees.	
CO10	To have a sustained focus on prevention, anticipation, support self-management and care at home.	
CO11	To ensure that all resources are deployed to the best effect, achieving desired outcomes, values for money and progressive approach to sustainability.	
-	None of the above	

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

The report allows management to consider current workforce statistics highlighting any specific pressures in terms of attendance and recruitment that need to be addressed.

2.3 Assessment

Workforce

On 30th April 2025 NHS Western Isles has a total headcount of 1101 (902.76 WTE) employees.

Staff numbers overall have increased. This was initially due to the covid response in terms of contact tracing and vaccinations. 2022 and 2024 also saw the transfer of staff from the medical practices in Barra and Uist.

The workforce is ageing with 46% (down from 48% in 2022) of employee's aged over 50 and the highest proportion of employees is in the age 55-59 category. The median age of the workforce is 47 compared to an NHS Scotland median age of 44 years. The normal pensionable retirement age continues to rise to 67 (previously 60 for women and 65 for men) which means that people are having to work longer to access pension benefits.

NHS Western Isles continues to attract young people to NHS careers through work experience, careers fairs and summer student recruitment. 24 work experience placements are planned between May and September (up from 17 in 2024). These placements are across Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Radiology, IT, Catering, Nursing and Medicine. Preparations are in place for another cohort of summer student placements from May and there are plans to advertise two catering apprenticeships in April.

Retirement

Options for retirement have expanded in the last three years to include partial retirement and retire and return. These provide a variety of options for accessing pension benefits and changing posts and work patterns for those approaching retirement age.

There have been 42 accepted applications in total for retire & return and partial retirement since the policies were introduced in 2022 and 2023. There have been 11 partial retirements.

Overtime

A total of 223 hours overtime were worked in April. The highest levels of overtime are in A&E and Hotel Service. There are plans for additional recruitment in A&E to reduce the reliance on overtime. Hotel Services continue with a high level of vacancies.

Bank and Agency Usage

Bank is primarily used for cover in nursing and domestic service due to vacancies and sickness absence. Agency/Locums are primarily used to cover long term Consultant vacancies in Psychiatry, General Medical, General Surgical, Paediatrics and Radiology. There was no agency usage in nursing or radiography in December.

There is no significant fluctuation in locum spend. All agency contracts are reviewed on a three month basis to ensure best value and strict controls are in place when engaging agency with sign off through the Chief Executive.

A review of Out of Hours arrangements is underway for Lewis and Harris.

Attendance

There was a slight rise in absence during the winter months that continues into April at 6.21%.

National data shows that NHS Western Isles has the 3rd lowest rate of absence of all territorial boards for the period 1st February 2024 to 31st January 2025.

Employee Relations Officer's and Occupational Health are working closely to monitor absence and ensure all absences are being managed. A monthly meeting is held to analyse absence and follow up with managers on any absences that are not being managed appropriately.

Performance review of senior managers includes management of sickness absence. The Director of HR and Workforce Development has met with managers during October and November in areas with the highest absence to ensure all possible actions have been taken. There is a high level of assurance that the attendance management process is being applied consistently to staff who have met triggers.

Recruitment

A total of 411 posts have been advertised over the last 12 months with 6761 applications received which is an average of 17 applications per post.

Whilst number of applications are falling this is due to better control over speculative applications rather than a decrease in suitable applications, although suitable applications overall remain low.

Job Train functionality of 'killer questions' are used to filter out speculative applications from applications who do not meet the essential criteria. Whilst this can be effective to a certain extent applicants can circumvent the questions and submit applications. The HR team continue to assist managers sifting these high volumes.

Recruitment activity remains steady. According to national data NHS Western Isles currently has the fewest number of nursing vacancies across territorial Boards in Scotland.

The themes in hard to recruit posts are specialist skills (medics, AHPs, mental health) with shortages across the country. It should be noted that Psychiatry has the most Consultant vacancies across the country (57.7 WTE at 1 June 2024). Those in a remote more isolated location (posts in Uist & Barra) are also more difficult to recruit to.

Actions taken to enhance recruitment include the following:

- Successful recruitment campaign for Rural GP's.
- Recruitment campaign for Consultant vacancies. This includes full page BMJ advert, BMJ enhanced online listings and accompanying communications.
- Exploration of international recruitment agencies for medical Consultant posts.
- Advertising vacancies with a local recruitment market in the local press.
- Collaboration with local Job Centre/DWP on marketing applications and supporting candidates with applications.
- Marketing benefits of working for NHS Western Isles in terms of leave, pension, flexible working and pay enhancements.
- Using social media to maximise reach and use of different advertising methods.
- Use of recruitment and retention premia where appropriate, for example, Pharmacy, Podiatry, Tradespersons and Catering
- International recruitment of AHPs.
- Advertisement of apprenticeships in Business Admin, IT and Catering. A Catering apprentice has been appointed.
- Requests for key worker housing from HHP resulting in suitable housing being identified for candidates.

2.3.1 Quality/ Patient Care

Describe any positive and negative impact on quality of care (and services)

2.3.2 Workforce

Describe any positive and negative impact on staff including resources, staff health and wellbeing.

2.3.3 Financial

Describe the financial impact (capital, revenue and efficiencies) and how this will be managed.

Name – Director of Finance / Finance Manager	Signature
Comment from the Director of Finance / Finance Manager	

2.3.4 Risk Assessment/Management

Describe relevant risk assessment/mitigations

2.3.5 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

State how this supports the Public Sector Equality Duty, Fairer Scotland Duty, and the Board's Equalities Outcomes.

An impact assessment has been completed and is available at... or

An impact assessment has not been completed because...

2.3.6 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Development

State how this report will support or impact on the Scottish Government's policy on Global Climate Emergency and Sustainability Development DL(2021)38, against the 5 themes:

1	Sustainable Buildings & Land	
2	Sustainable Travel	
3	Sustainable Goods and Services	
4	Sustainable Care	
5	Sustainable Communities	
Describe other relevant impacts:		

2.3.7 Other impacts

Describe other relevant impacts.

2.3.8 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

The Board has carried out its duties to involve and engage external stakeholders where appropriate:

State how this has been carried out and note any meetings that have taken place.

2.3.9 Route to the Meeting

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report.

2.4 Recommendation

State the action being requested. Use one of the following directions for the meeting. No other terminology should be used.

- **Assurance** – Obtaining assurance from the information presented.

3 List of appendices

The following appendices are included with this report:

- Workforce Report April 2025

END