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Dear Convener,

NHS in Scotland 2022

Thank you for your email of 11 May 2023, outlining the further information I committed to provide following my appearance at Committee on 4 May.

As I stated at that meeting, I welcome Audit Scotland's report, NHS in Scotland 2022, and see the close engagement between Audit Scotland and the Scottish Government as incredibly important.

Waiting Times information

You asked about the timescales for improving the transparency of waiting times information.

The waiting times information available on the NHS inform site is collated and quality assured by Public Health Scotland (PHS). We continue to engage with both NHS 24 and PHS to review the information available to the public.

This includes reviewing the recommendation from the Office of Statistics Regulation (OSR), to consider what additional data can be made available around waiting times, ensuring the range of waits experienced by patients is represented.

In addition to this, we are also engaging with patients to gather feedback on how we can further improve the information available.

This feedback will help respond to the OSR recommendation and support the development of an improvement plan over the coming months for user friendly

waiting times information. We anticipate that we will be in a position to update the site in early winter this year.

National Treatment Centres

You requested information on the original and expected timescales for the opening of all National Treatment Centres (NTCs), as well as initial budgets, spending to date and projected spend.

This Government has made the commitment that by 2026, we will have reduced NHS waiting times year-on-year and delivered year-on-year reductions in waiting lists and the new National Treatment Centres in NHS Fife, NHS Highland, NHS Forth Valley, NHS Golden Jubilee, with further centres in development, are key to this task.

The original plan, outlined in October 2015 was for six National Treatment Centres to be built in Lothian, Tayside, Grampian, Highland and two centres at the Golden Jubilee National Hospital. The original estimate was that they would cost £200 million in total, and be completed by 2021. At that point, costs for individual projects had not yet been established.

Subsequent to the original announcement, the programme was expanded to include additional centres in Forth Valley, Ayrshire and Arran, Lanarkshire and Fife as well as the replacement of the Eye Pavilion in Edinburgh.

The table below outlines the cost of the centres that have been completed or are in construction:

	As stated in Full Business Case		Actual / projected	
	Cost	Opening Date	Cost	Opening Date
Golden Jubilee – Eye Centre (Phase 1)	£15.3m	July 20	£15.3m	Opened Nov 20
NTC Fife	£33.2m	Sep 22	£34.3m	Opened Mar 23
NTC Highland	£41.3m	Please see below	£48.57m	Opened Apr 23
NTC Forth Valley	£10.17m	Dec 22	£12.7m	Scheduled Sep 23
Golden Jubilee – Phase 2	£80.9m	Dec 22	£82.3m	Scheduled Dec 23

Regarding NHS Highland, the original planned opening date of July 2021 (and planned construction completion of May 2021), was based on the full business case being approved in May 2019. Consideration of the full business case was deferred

until the January 2020 Capital Investment Group meeting, and the approval letter issued in February 2020. At the date of approval, the revised opening date would have been April 2022. The overall time frame for delivery of the project has been impacted by Covid, particularly during 2020.

For the remaining centres, the costs and dates for opening will be confirmed on submission and approval of their final business cases.

Scottish student access to medical courses at Scottish universities

You asked about the Scottish Government funding arrangements in place to ensure Scottish students have access to places on medical courses at Scottish universities.

Scottish domiciled students undertaking their first undergraduate course at publicly funded higher education institutions in Scotland have their tuition fees paid by the Scottish Government.

In addition to free tuition, our student support package provides a minimum income of £9,000 (from the start of the 2023/24 academic year), through a combination of bursaries and loans, for eligible students with a household income of less £21,000.

Moreover, all Scottish domiciled students, irrespective of circumstances are eligible for a loan of up to £6,000 (from the start of the 2023/24 academic year) a year for the full duration of their medical degree.

This is an increase of £900 for all eligible undergraduate students in Higher Education from the 2023/24 academic year. This follows on from a £350 uplift that was provided in the 2022/23 academic year.

For our graduate entry medical course, ScotGEM, funding is provided for all Scottish domiciled applicants, even though this is their second degree.

ScotGEM students are eligible to apply for and receive a 'Return of Service' bursary of £4,000 per annum which commits them to working for NHS Scotland for the corresponding number of years following graduation (i.e., if a student takes the full £16,000 bursary then they need to work for NHS Scotland for 4 years).

Scottish students studying medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, and completion rates

For the academic year 2021-22, 780 Scottish domiciled full-time first degree students entered their first year of studying pre-clinical medicine with 255 studying pharmacy.

No students in that year entered pre-clinical dentistry, as dental schools closed during the pandemic and then restarted their studies in 2021-22 (a decision made due to the unique impact of Covid-19 on the safety of common dental procedures).

This information is based on Scottish Government analysis of the latest available data from Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Figure are rounded to the nearest 5, and based on full person equivalents.

On the subject of completion rates, it is difficult to track medical students from when they enter the programme to when they graduate, and completion rates are therefore not something that the Scottish Government calculate.

However, we can provide figures for the number of students that have graduated.

In the academic year 2021-2022 there were 580 Scottish domiciled full time first degree clinical medicine qualifiers from Scottish providers, 95 clinical dentistry graduates, and 195 pharmacy graduates. This information is based on analysis of the latest available HESA data, and the figures are again rounded to the nearest 5, and based on full person equivalents.

GP Training

The recruitment of trainee doctors is managed annually by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and is predominantly undertaken on a UK-wide basis.

The number of posts advertised by NES each year is determined by two factors. The first is the number of trainees who have completed training, achieved a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) and whose posts are therefore vacant, and the second is whether any additional posts have been created, such as expansion posts, and so for that reason the number of posts recruited to varies annually.

The recruitment of trainee doctors into the GP Speciality Training programme from 2018-2022 is set out below:

2022: 326 posts advertised, 322 filled (98.77%)

2021: 323 posts advertised, 321 filled (99.38%)

2020: 347 posts advertised, 336 filled (96.83%)

2019: 340 posts advertised, 325 filled (95.59%)

2018: 347 posts advertised, 292 filled (84.15%)

GP numbers – the 800 recruitment commitment

It was asked whether we could provide information on how many of these 800 GPs were or will be full time or part time.

The 800 GP commitment is for an increase in GP headcount. As the landscape for General Practice is changing, we are seeing many GPs choosing to alter the way in which they are working.

This is for a range of reasons, including the desire to develop portfolio careers taking on important clinical lead roles within Health Boards, as well as part of achieving a work-life balance. We see this a positive, as it keeps GPs in practice that might otherwise leave the profession.

The General Practice Workforce Survey (2022) published by Public Health Scotland suggests that on average there is a 0.77 Whole Time Equivalent for every GP by Headcount.

I hope this information is useful and I look forward to further engagement from the Committee.

Kind regards,

Caroline Lamb
Chief Executive, NHS Scotland and Director-General for Health and Social