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Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June, seeking additional information following my letter of 8 June.

National Treatment Centres

Information was provided on the timescales, initial budgets and spending to date for National Treatment Centres (NTCs) that have been completed or are in construction.

The Committee has since asked for a progress update for all remaining NTCs, including current projected costs and opening dates.

The original plan 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 these six Centres would cost £200 million in total and be completed by 2021.

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

For the projects not yet in construction, the estimated costs are noted in the table below:

	Estimated cost	Stage of Development
NTC – Lothian (Livingston)	£238m	Outline Business Case
NTC – Tayside (Perth)	£164m	Outline business case
NTC – Grampian (including Dr Gray’s MRI)	£130m	Outline business case
NTC – Ayrshire and Arran (Carrick Glen)	£53m	Full Business Case
NTC – Lanarkshire (Cumbernauld)	£50m	Initial Agreement
	£635m	
Replacement Eye Pavilion	£130m	Initial agreement
Lothian - Decontamination and Sterile Services facility	£62m	Initial agreement
	£827m	

The inclusion of the Lothian - Decontamination and Sterile Services facility as a linked requirement to the NTC-Lothian project is due to issues that have arisen within the existing Sterile Services Unit.

In August 2022, NHS Lothian temporarily closed its Hospital Sterilisation and Decontamination Unit (HSDU) at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh due to a water leak.

The closure forced the postponement of planned and non-emergency surgery for a number of days. NHS Lothian are currently undertaking a strategic review of the service which will inform a future decision and preferred solution.

The cost increases on all of the projects have been as a result of a number of factors.

These include general inflationary factors, the significant increase in costs of key materials impacted by the war in Ukraine, and the requirement to meet net carbon zero requirements for all new buildings.

Finally, the service and clinical modelling undertaken as part of the business cases has resulted in an increase in the capacity required, and hence the size, of these facilities.

As a result of the forecasted significant cost increases, it is difficult to accommodate all of the above projects within the agreed capital spending review settlement for the health portfolio.

The last published dates for the programme were included in the NHS Scotland Recovery plan 2021 – 2026 (released August 2021). These were as follows:

	NHS Scotland Recovery Plan	Current position
Golden Jubilee – Phase 2	Opening 2023	Due to open Dec 23
NTC Fife	Opening 2022	Opened Mar 23
NTC Highland	Opening 2022	Opened Apr 23
NTC Forth Valley	Opening 2022	Due to open Sep/Oct 23
NTC Ayrshire and Arran	Opening 2025	Note 1
NTC Tayside	Opening 2025	Note 1
NTC Grampian	Opening 2025	Note 1
NTC Lothian	Opening 2025	Note 1
NTC Lanarkshire	Opening 2026	Note 1

Note 1: Final costs and opening dates for each of the Centres not yet in construction will be confirmed at the point the full business case is approved.

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

The Committee asked what work the Scottish Government has undertaken to assess the impact of closing dental schools during the Covid-19 pandemic on the future workforce, and any action that is being taken to prevent any possible future workforce shortages.

As the Committee noted dental schools had to close due to the unique impact of Covid-19 on the safety of dental procedures.

Ministers took advice from the dental schools as to whether they had capacity to allow intake in the Academic Year 2021/22.

Schools advised that doing so would have a detrimental impact on the ability of those required to repeat a year to complete with sufficient clinical experience.

Therefore, understanding the modelling work of the time which suggested a knock-on impact of a temporarily reduced workforce for the subsequent five years, Ministers took the difficult but necessary decision to agree to no intake for Academic Year 21/22.

The pandemic effectively suspended undergraduate and vocational training for one year. The resumption of that training means we are training 160 dentists per year, 5 per cent of the total workforce.

It's worth noting we have an excellent track record in growing the NHS dental workforce in Scotland – with 55 dentists per 100,000 of the population. This is compared with 43 per 100,000 in England.

We are exploring ways in which we could improve the registration process for overseas dentists on a 4-country basis. Presently we have seen a backlog in the General Dental Council registration process, and we need to expedite this as soon as practically possible.

The Scottish Government also has a number of allowances and grants available in certain Board areas to support the recruitment and retention of dentists. This includes the Recruitment and Retention allowance which pays a new qualified trainee dentist up to £37,500 over a three year period.

GP numbers – the 800 recruitment commitment

During the evidence session on 4 May, the Committee asked how many of the 800 GPs the Scottish Government has committed to recruit either were or would be working full time or part time.

I subsequently informed the Committee by letter that on average there is a 0.77 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) for every GP by Headcount.

The Committee sought a trend analysis in relation to the WTE figure for GPs working part-time to establish how the 0.77 WTE figure reported in 2022 compares to previous years.

The Committee can see the information in the table, supplied below.

GP headcount and estimated Whole Time Equivalent, excluding Registrar trainee GPs, 2013-2022.

Date	Headcount	Estimated WTE^{bc}	Estimated WTE per Headcount
31/01/2013	4,394	3,675	0.84
31/08/2015	4,410	3,604	0.82
31/08/2017	4,385	3,520	0.80
31/03/2019	4,400	3,613	0.82
31/03/2022	4,514	3,494 ^a	0.77

Source: Public Health Scotland: General Practice Workforce Survey 2022

Notes:

a. No data was received for number of sessions held for Salaried GPs or Retainer GPs in 2022. For these designations, data from 2019 was imputed into this survey to create the final estimates.

b. One WTE is defined as eight weekly contracted GP sessions.

c. The estimated WTE (in the absence of a 100% survey response rate) was based on scaling the sample headcount from the survey to match the national headcount from National Primary Care

Clinicians Database. Previous survey WTEs (up to 2017) have been scaled using the same method to ensure a consistent trend.

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

Kind regards,

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