

Monday 13 November 2023

Our first week in November – the week that was... *If we had a penny every time we talked about ‘system pressures’, we’d be sitting on a tidy sum by now. We all hear it, many of us experience it first hand, but what does it mean? Too often we get buried in the stats and as important as that is, we want to provide a brief situation update each week to explain what is being experienced and what factors may be contributing to it. Based on the insights drawn from the data of course. Interested? Then read on:*

The first week of November was a pressured time if our measures of operational pressure are anything to go by. G-OPES levels have worsened week on week since late September and are now significantly higher than a year ago. Royal Cornhill and Medical/Unscheduled Care have been regularly affected over the past week. Several GP Practices reported full or partial suspension of services during storm Babet, but this situation has improved over the past week, with no practices reporting the highest levels of operational pressure.

Is this all about an increasing demand for emergency care? We saw a 9% rise in ED attendances between this week and last – an extra 85 patients over the week. The main reasons for this were a rise in falls – up 19% from the previous week and up 33% from the same week last year. Looking at longer-term trends here, falls seem to be returning to similar levels seen before the pandemic, yet the situation is worsening amongst older people. Over 65s accounted for 56% of falls in 2019, but 69% last week. Is it a sign of deconditioning post pandemic or are more people out and about?

Neuro-related attendances were up 23% from the week before and road traffic collision related attendances almost doubled. This may be related to the clocks changing and temperatures dropping through the week. However, despite the increases highlighted here, the overall number of ED attendances last week were at very similar levels to the same period last year. Where there has been a change, is in inpatient admissions from ED. It’s not so much a rise from the previous week as a change from the previous year. For the past couple of weeks, hospital admissions from ED for falls have been around 80% higher than the same period a year ago. Contrast this to changing health presentations for chest, heart, and stroke – all considerably lower than this time last year.

Admissions means beds, and we are working at extremely high levels of bed occupancy in every part of our system – in acute hospitals, community hospitals, and care homes. Anything over 85% can lead to regular bed shortages, periodic bed crises and increased numbers of health care-acquired infections. Most of our services are operating at over 100% and not just occasionally.

Surges in demand, longer lengths of stay in hospital and delayed discharges all contribute to high occupancy. The temporary closure of beds impacts too – often due to the availability of staff or maintenance work. The high levels of occupancy seen over the past week don’t appear to be affected by closing beds in ARI although it could partly explain the pressures in Royal Cornhill. Community hospitals this week have been affected by COVID-19 outbreaks, leading to the full or partial closure of up to 6 wards, and it can take days for capacity to return to normal. Taken together, these pressures

create bottlenecks and flow problems, not least for the ambulance service where delays at ED are beginning to increase again, with 17 ambulances waiting during a busy early evening mid-week.

Working at such high intensity for long periods leaves little and often no room for services to recover. Acute access to care would be worse if we didn't have the Flow Navigation Centre but it's clear that alongside efforts in prevention and self-management, more capacity is needed to provide care for a growing, ageing, sicker population. A challenge not just affecting Grampian but the whole of Scotland and the UK.

We hope this 'scene setter' has been useful and interesting for you. We plan to provide regular updates, over the winter period, so you are all well informed about pressures across the system.

Working together to stop fraud This week is International Fraud Awareness week. Counter Fraud Services, in partnership with NHS Grampian, are aiming to raise awareness on the risks of fraud in the health and social care environment and provide advice and guidance on how to identify, prevent and report fraud. Today's message is on the topic of bank mandate fraud; [there's more information via this link](#).

If you are concerned about fraud in NHS Grampian, Julie Anderson is our local fraud liaison officer; she can be contacted via julie.anderson24@nhs.scot or you can call the national fraud reporting line on 08000 15 16 28.

Appointment of General Manager, eHealth Following a competitive process, Martin Innes will join NHS Grampian as the General Manager of eHealth on 8 January 2024. Martin has a wide range of experience in the information digital arena at a senior operational and strategic level within UK government and NHS England system. This breadth of experience will be an asset to us in delivering digital ambitions set out in the Plan for the Future.

Planned HEPMA/PSC downtime There will be a period of planned downtime between 0.15 - 3.30am **this** Thursday (16 November). eHealth has put together a guide for those services affected; it is attached to the email used to send out this brief.

Staff Equalities Network The next meeting of the network will take place on Wednesday (15 November) between 2-3pm on Teams. This month we are revisiting the topic of reverse mentoring, one of the ambitions identified for the [NHS Grampian Antiracism Plan 2023](#).

Some of you may have attended the Staff Equalities Network session in February this year where we welcomed Colette Turpie, Leadership and Talent, Police Scotland, and Tracey Leete, NHS Grampian Organisational Development Facilitator who took us through ambitions for reverse mentoring in our respective organisations. On Wednesday we will welcome Collete and Tracey back for an update.

The Staff Equalities Network meet on the third Wednesday of each month. If you would like any further information, would like to get involved, or would like the link to join this and future meetings, please email gram.staffequalites@nhs.scot

Support & Understanding for Neurodivergent Nurses (SUNN) event tomorrow We shared information about this event on Friday, but unfortunately with the wrong link. If you are curious about what it means to be a neurodivergent nurse or want to learn more about how you can support neurodivergent student nurses and colleagues, then join the first monthly SUNN meet up **tomorrow** (Tuesday) from 7.30-8.30pm. Book your free space here: [SUNN's first monthly meet up- The experience of neurodivergent nurses. Tickets, Tue, Nov 14, 2023 at 7:30 PM | Eventbrite](#)

Quality Improvement and Assurance Newsletter The 5th edition of our team newsletter is now available on the intranet (networked devices only): [Inspiring Quality, May-August 2023](#).

Pause for thought Who or what is impeding you moving forward? What would it take to clear the way?

Tune of the day Guess who's back, back again? All change in Westminster today, with the return of a very familiar face. [Without Me by Eminem](#) is our tune of the day. It's Marshall, so the lyrics are forthright as ever... (EP)

If you want to request a tune, follow up on items included in this brief, or suggest an item for sharing, drop us an email via gram.communications@nhs.scot