

**NSS Assist
Progress Report
2023/24**



**Partnership and
Collaboration**

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Introduction

NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) – Assist

NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) was established as the Common Services Agency in 1974 under The National Health Service (Functions of the Common Services Agency) (Scotland) Order 1974, with a mandate to provide national strategic support services and expert advice to Scotland's health and care sector, whilst maximising positive health outcomes and providing best value services.

In 2013, the Public Services Reform (Functions of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service) (Scotland) Order 2013 extended the remit of NSS enabling the provision of services to other bodies, including Health and Social Care Partnerships, local authorities and government departments.

The following year, the Public Bodies (Joint Working) Scotland Act 2014 reinforced this requirement to maximise health, financial and environmental impacts by engaging with, and offering services, to the wider public sector in Scotland.

NSS continues to work closely with our partner organisations, including NHS Boards, health and social care partnerships, emergency services and local authorities, to ensure that our services align with the evolving needs of the health and social care system in Scotland.

NSS Strategic Framework

NSS is integral to Scotland's health and care service. We set ourselves three priorities to ensure this is maintained.

- 1. Enable health and care transformation with new services**
Harnessing NSS's wide-ranging skills and expertise to deliver national infrastructure solutions and services.
- 2. Underpin NHS Scotland with excellent services**
Providing national infrastructure solutions integral to the delivery of health and care services in Scotland.
- 3. Assist other organisations involved in health and care**
Connecting a range of partners and stakeholders to ensure our services support the wider health and social care system.

Through the NSS Assist strategic priority, by actively engaging and building relationships with stakeholders across all areas of health and care, NSS can respond quickly and appropriately to the needs of new policy requirements and health and care emergencies.



We are already supporting Health and Social Care Integration Authorities, Public Health Scotland, Local Authorities and Scottish Government Non-departmental Public Bodies and Agencies.

Purpose

To provide an update on NHS National Services Scotland's (NSS) collaboration and partnership working. Such organisations include: integration authorities, local authorities, emergency services, the wider Scottish Government departments and agencies.

Background

The previous NSS Strategy 2019 to 2024 has now been superseded by the NSS Strategic Framework 2024 to 2026. This outlines our strategic priorities with a focus again around Enable, Underpin and Assist. This strategic framework highlights the importance of pan-public collaboration and partnership working, to collectively identify problems and deliver solutions at scale and pace, to support the delivery of better health and social care outcomes.

Our Vision –

“To be integral to Scotland’s health and care service.”



Our Purpose – Reflects why we were established and guides everything we do:

“We provide national solutions to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Scotland.”

Our Vision – Recognises what we need to achieve over the next 2 years:

“To be integral to a world-leading national health and care service.”

Our Values and Our People – Guides everything we do to fulfil our purpose and makes our vision a reality.

“We use our values to create an environment where employees can thrive and deliver great services.”

Integration Authorities

Health and Social Care Partnerships

Assist is a member of the Health and Social Care Scotland and Chief Officers Reference Group (CORG) and provides wider strategic links across other sectors and organisations where NSS Assist is actively engaged.

There was growth in the interest in the CORG from Chief Officers and, National Health Boards and Public Sector Organisations and Scottish Government. Presentations and discussions included the following:

- North Lanarkshire HSCP (Screening Inequalities Programme and Detect Cancer Early)
- Office of the Chief Social Work Advisor (OCSWA) – Scottish Government
- Public Health Scotland – Whole System Modelling
- Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) – Workforce Data and Visualisation Programme

From NSS, the following individuals and teams presented:

- Albert King (DAS) – Near Time Data Programme
- Keith Moffat (Clinical Directorate) - GP IT System Development
- Ruth Campbell (Clinical Directorate) RDI and ANIA pathway
- Social Care Integration Lead and Primary Care and Counter Fraud Services

This forum continues to enable NSS Directorates to engage with health and social care colleagues working across integrated services, raising awareness of key NSS activities and potential for collaborations. It also presents the opportunity for NSS to learn and understand the complexities and opportunities that exist across HSCPs, integration and social care challenges and potential solutions.

National Organisations (Joint Account Management)

NSS is part of the pan-public National Improvement Organisations Huddle, and the Joint Account Management Team. The aims of the Huddle are for NHS Boards and wider National Improvement bodies to seek collaboration opportunities and improve support for Health and Social Integration.

In terms of the Joint Account Management Team, there have been some twenty-four meetings and follow on meetings with Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs), Chief Officers and senior leaders to identify areas where more improvement support can be provided.

These meetings focused on a range of support activities namely, **Workforce Challenges; Lack of Improvement Capacity; Data Analysis; Development Support for New IJB Members; Digital and Service Transformation.**

NSS continues to work with the Improvement Service, to support the Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs) self-assessment engagements using the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) <https://shorturl.at/EFIS3>

This has included the following:

PSiF for Health and Social Care

Aberdeenshire APC
Argyll & Bute IJB
Chester Park Care Home
Clackmannanshire and Stirling Chief Officers Group
Craigieknowes Care Home
Dundee Adult Protection Committee
Dundee Child Protection Committee
East Ayrshire CPC
East Dunbartonshire IJB
Midlothian IJB
North Lanarkshire IJB
Scottish Borders IJB
Shetland HSCP
South Ayrshire IJB
West Dunbartonshire CPC
West Dunbartonshire HSCP

Local Authorities

Through a Local Government Engagement Plan, NSS explored opportunities around partnership working and collaboration where it is mutually feasible, suitable and acceptable to NSS.

Assistance has been provided to ten local authorities. The key areas include: Data and Intelligence; Digital and Information Technology; and Procurement. In these areas, there have been the sharing of knowledge and practice to help stakeholders to deliver on their own strategic priorities and business objectives. Developing strategic partnerships and engaging with public sector senior leaders and decision makers, has been crucial for success.



The support and assistance provided by NSS continues to focus around three areas:



1. Supporting Better Decisions

Through learning and sharing knowledge, practice and processes, where efficient data and intelligence provides the tools to support effective decisions at strategic and operational levels.

2. Improving Performance

Better use of management information approaches using tools including data virtualisation systems, to assist leaders understand where maximum impacts around improving outcomes are being achieved.

3. Delivering Best Value

To ensure that the optimum use of all resources – people; land/assets; financial stewardship; infrastructure capacities, all combined to deliver high quality and value-added services.

Assist helps to make connections and facilitates conversations with public sector and wider third and independent organisations, encouraging joint-working and partnerships, through bringing together the right people, at the right time and at the right place to improve health and social care outcomes for the people of Scotland.



Wider Local Government Engagement

Children, Young People and Adults - Joint Chronologies Pan Lothian Partnership

NSS provides ongoing leadership and support to the Pan-Lothian Partnership. This includes The City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Fife, Midlothian, West Lothian Councils, Police Scotland, NHS Lothian and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

A common approach across the partnership has been developed, tested and implemented. This should lead to improving the exchange of data and information across multi-agencies, specific to vulnerable children, young people and adults.

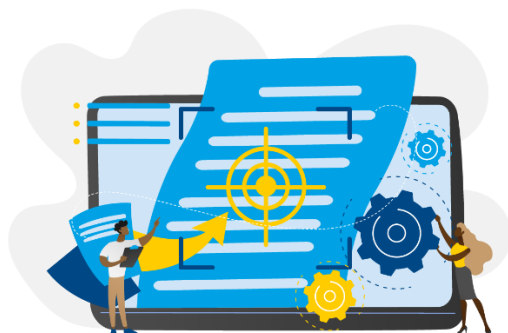
As previously highlighted, the Pan Lothian Joint Chronologies Common Approach has been included as a Practice Note within the National Child Protection Guidance. The guidance was published by the Scottish Government on 2 September 2021, and updated in 2023.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/documents/>

Other local authorities have approached the Programme/Partnership/Initiative, to be involved with all materials available on a Knowledge Hub Group at [Home - Pan Lothian Partnership - Joint Chronologies - Knowledge Hub \(khub.net\)](#).

The partnership is also engaged and supporting a National Chronologies Group which includes the Scottish Government.

Since the previous annual report, Scottish Government Ministers have also expressed interest in this work, hence the remit of the National Chronologies Working Group is gathering pace and wider interest. The National Care Service Team continues interest in the activities of the Chronologies Common Approach, with links to the wider ambitions around further integration of public services.



Scotland Excel and NSS National Procurement

Scotland Excel (SXL) and NSS National Procurement (NP) continue to meet regularly and explore mutual areas where there are business opportunities to collaborate around strategic procurement. Both organisations are able to use established procurement frameworks and share approaches around staff training and development.

Already there have been shared learning and knowledge transfer around the challenges faced pre and post the global pandemic.

Both organisations have committed to continue building on the strong working relationship through a Strategic Collaboration Agreement, approved by both organisations on 22 February 2023.

Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal

The Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal (ESESCR) is a £1.3billion partnership. It comprises six local authorities. East Lothian, The City of Edinburgh, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian councils.

It's estimated that an additional £3.2bn worth of private sector investment could be leveraged. The deal was finally approved by both the Scottish and UK Governments almost five years ago on 7 August 2018.

There are five key themes; Research, Development, and Innovation; Integrated Regional Employability and Skills; Transport; Culture and Housing.

NSS has a range of expertise and knowledge which supports the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. NSS is already providing data and information to help enable delivery around health outcome indicators, research and reporting. These activities support national and local health deliverables and place Scotland as a global leader in health informatics research.

NSS / NHS Scotland is represented on the ESESCR Labour Market Analysis and Evaluation Theme Group, and the Health and Social Care (HSC) Skills Gateway Delivery Board. NSS was a panel evaluator for a commissioned research project around the impacts of the Covid global pandemic, on workforce digital skills gaps.

NSS continues to be an important contributor to the development of the ESESCR Benefits Realisation Reporting Framework, which includes measures around improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

SOLACE



NSS continues its links with SOLACE as a key strategic stakeholder group, with six memberships covering the executive and established leader levels. A range of leadership development approaches and seminars on specific areas of interest, has been made available to NSS senior leaders.

This has been a mature working relationship with SOLACE which has supported implementation of the Local Government Engagement Plan. NSS has re-enforced the strategic links between local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships, which has resulted in more opportunities to support improving health and care outcomes, were these are considered feasible, suitable and acceptable across NSS Directorates.

COSLA

Another key strategic partner for NSS, is the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

There are synergies across COSLA and NSS around the health and social care agenda with opportunities to link up at a strategic level. A series of meetings have taken place with COSLA to explore areas of mutual interest. The common objectives are focused on national initiatives such as Public Health Reform, Climate Change and Post Covid Recovery. The COSLA Chief Executive, is fully aware of NSS, its services and engagements across local authorities, and the wider pan-public and health and social care partnerships.



Emergency Services

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NSS and SFRS, agreed on 5 August 2021, NSS has been working with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), across a range of activities which includes a pilot to develop a shared vulnerability groups index. This has involved building an understanding of risks across vulnerable communities, and how that can be reflected in the data analysis sharing processes. The MOU shall be refreshed in 2024.

The Holistic Risk Assessment Profiling for Targeted Vulnerable Groups brings together data from all the emergency services bodies. Partners examine the shared patterns of demand facing the services. They look at the vulnerabilities that generate demand patterns from individuals and households.

The project will build evidence to inform the development of more efficient and effective service redesign. This will aim to manage the demand while seeking to achieve better outcomes for the most vulnerable people in our society.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is also a member of the Pan Lothian Partnership Joint Chronologies, where there are synergies with SFRS strategic objectives around safer communities.

It is also noted that the agreement between NSS and SFRS around collaboration supports the Strategic Plan 2022 to 2025 Outcome Seven: Community safety and wellbeing improves as we work effectively with our partners. It has been agreed that a renewed MOU for collaboration shall be approved, when the new SFRS Fire Chief Officer is in post in November 2024.



Police Scotland

Police Scotland has implemented the 2024/25 Annual Police Plan which has five Strategic Outcomes. These describe the results Police Scotland is working towards for the people of Scotland. This helps to show how it will make a positive impact through what is being done across the service.

Outcome 1: Threats to public safety and wellbeing are resolved by a proactive and responsive police service.

Outcome 2: The needs of local communities are addressed through effective service delivery.

Outcome 3: The public, communities and partners are engaged, involved and have confidence in policing.

Outcome 4: Our people are supported through a positive working environment, enabling them to serve the public.

Outcome 5: Police Scotland is sustainable, adaptable and prepared for future challenges.

There are clear links to wider health and care outcomes in the plan, most notably a commitment to:

‘Design services jointly to tackle complex public safety and wellbeing challenges’

Police Scotland and NSS have met on many occasions, and there is an appetite to collaborate around a range of areas including Data & Intelligence, Digital and IT, Research and Business Intelligence. NSS has helped Police Scotland to better understand data and intelligence, specifically around Custody Healthcare and Interventions.

There are already mature links with Police Scotland, through the support provided by NSS National Services Division (NSD) to the national Police Care Network.

NSS has also provided ‘critical friend’ advice to Police Scotland in support of delivering their Annual Police Plan 2024/25 including a focus around mental health and wellbeing.

The above activities are enabled and continue through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Police Scotland and NSS for Collaborative Working, approved on 26 October 2023.



Scottish Ambulance Service

There is a deep history of joint working between the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and NSS. We continue to work together to support operational requirements, to meet national emergency and contingency planning.

Building on the positive partnership and collaboration working particularly during the management of COVID-19 Testing Sites across Scotland, there has been shared learning between both organisations. Many innovations developed during the pandemic are being shared with NSS and other sectors / organisations, to raise awareness and assess the potential to scale up across other service delivery partners.

NSS supports the mission of SAS around 'Working together with the people of Scotland, our staff and partners to deliver sustainable and effective care, experience and treatment, anticipating needs and preventing ill health'

There are a range of synergies between NSS and SAS where there are common objectives around enabling delivery through areas such as Digital, Data, Research and Innovation

These opportunities are now being explored through the National Services Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service Strategic Collaboration Agreement. Which was approved on 31 May 2022.



Third and Independent Sector

The Scottish Third and Independent sector encompasses around 45,000 voluntary organisations. Around half of these organisations are charities such as:

- small sports groups
- pre-school day care centres
- self-help groups
- health and well-being services
- housing and major social care providers (including care homes and care at home organisations)

There are over 46,500 voluntary organisations active in Scotland ▪ This includes 25,427 Scottish Charities in 2022/23 and over 1,000 UK-wide charities operating in Scotland. ▪ The figure also includes over 20,000 community groups not registered as charities.

For every 10 registered charities there are a further 8 community groups. • 89% of voluntary organisations are local 80% of Scottish charities and 98% of community groups are local. • 35% of voluntary organisations are based in rural or remote areas.

Charities and community groups play a particularly important role in rural areas, with more charities and community groups per head of population than urban areas.

- Scottish charity income in 2022/23 was £14 billion comprising:

Source OSCR <https://shorturl.at/cimLN>

NSS Assist has engaged with several Chief Executives and senior leaders where there are aligned objectives to improve national health and social care outcomes.

Key areas include:

- Data and Intelligence;
- Digital and Information Technology;
- Innovation;
- Mental health practices.

A formal Memorandum of Understanding around Collaboration Working between NSS and the ALLIANCE was agreed on 7 March 2022. This is to be renewed in 2024.

An example of support provided to the ALLIANCE was NSS Assist agreed to be a member of the grant evaluation panel for the Self-Management Fund for Scotland 2023. NSS is also taking up the invitation to again join the grant evaluation panel for the Self-Management Fund for Scotland 2024.

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) administers the Self-Management Fund on behalf of the Scottish Government to third sector and community-based organisations across Scotland, to develop self-management activities. Since 2009, The ALLIANCE has granted over £24 million and has funded 398 projects across Scotland. For 2024 the fund available totals sum £2million.

In respect to Voluntary Health Scotland (VHS), a Collaboration Agreement between VHS and NSS was agreed on 3 November 2023.



Other Wider Initiatives

Peaceplus

Peaceplus is a € 1.1bn cross-border funding Programme supported by the European Union, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Government of Ireland, and the Northern Ireland administration. Scotland participates as a functional area. Peaceplus is a successor to the Interreg VA programme in which NSS led for Scottish Government's health and care initiatives.

Since summer 2023, the International Engagement Team within PGMS has worked with ten multi-sector organisations in Scotland to support them to collaborate with 15 partners in Ireland and Northern Ireland to seek funding from Peaceplus. In spring 2024, two € 10m applications were submitted. A decision is due in September 2024. If successful, participation will allow NSS to support the Assist strategic priority and build new relationships and opportunities in Scotland and internationally until 2028.



NSS an Anchor Institution

Anchor institutions are large and locally rooted organisations like Hospitals, Health Centres, Local Authorities, Universities / Colleges, and big global businesses with local headquarters. They employ many people, spend substantial funds, own and manage land and assets, and often deliver crucial services, and they have a weighty impact on local communities and economies.

NSS as a large organisation, has already developed and implemented a range of national policies, and practices associated with an anchor institution around: Procurement; Human Resources; Facilities and Assets. NSS has also linked with other Anchor Organisations, to explore strategic and operational collaborative opportunities.

A short life working group was established with representation across NSS to conduct a baseline self-assessment, and understand what gaps are identified for improvements. Papers and presentation have been made to the Executive Management Team and the Finance Planning and Procurement Committee.

As with all NHS Boards, NSS submitted an initial Anchor Strategic Plan to Scottish Government on 27 October 2023. This plan outlined how NSS shall take forward actions to deliver on the ambitions and objectives included within the plan. NSS also submitted a set of Baseline Metrics for 2022/23 across 42 measures specified by Scottish Government. NSS submitted a return on 25 March 2024.

There are also links with the national Care and Wellbeing Portfolio Board around Anchors and Community Wealth Building, and how these contribute to national outcomes.

National Care Service

Legislation passed on 21 June 2022, enacted the framework for the establishment of a National Care Service (NCS). NSS has responded to Scottish Government consultations and presented papers to the Executive Management Team.

Following an extended consultation period which concluded on the 31st January 2024, recommendations were made by the Health, Social Care and Sports Committee which are intended to strengthen the NCS Bill. The Scottish Government sent Stage 2 draft amendments to the Health, Social Care and Sports committee in June 2024.

An Expert Legislative Advisory Group (ELAG) met regularly during the summer months to explore further, and develop, various Stage 2 amendments. This group will continue to inform work on secondary legislation, guidance and best practice. An NCS Boards Chairs and Chief Executives Sub Group has been established and NSS has membership, to understand the potential strategic and operational impacts from the implementation of the NCS.

A Senior Health and Social Care Integration Lead has also been appointed, to ensure that strategic connections are established and continue to engage with key stakeholders and influencers around the NCS.

NSS Assist continues to support developments around the NCS and ensure ongoing strategic links with other sectors and key stakeholders are maintained.



Strategic Networks

NSS has a well-established network of key strategic groups. These span Scottish Government, health, local government, non-departmental public bodies and executive agencies. Since the implementation of The Public Services Reform (Functions of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service) (Scotland) Order 2013, and the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland Act) 2014, these networks are even more strategically important.

Conclusions

1. Our ongoing strategic engagements, partnerships, and collaborations between NSS and other organisations (as determined within the Assist Action Plan), has confirmed that NSS still plays an important role in supporting and assisting organisations deliver on their strategic objectives around improving wider health and social care outcomes.
2. New networks and working relationships have been established and continue to develop across sectors and organisations.
3. The awareness and profile of NSS has increased exponentially across integration authorities, local authorities, emergency services, and the wider Scottish public / third and independent sectors organisations. This has a positive impact on our reputational standing and validates NSS as a 'partner of choice and trust'.
4. NSS is supporting senior leadership in developing and building strategic partnerships across sectors. Engaging with senior leaders and influencers supports NSS's strategic objectives around 'Assisting other organisations involved in health and care' as well as promoting a 'Once for Scotland' approach.

If you require an alternative format please contact
NSS.EqualityDiversity@nhs.scot

Telephone 0131 275 6000

BSL ContactScotlandBSL [Contact Scotland \(contactscotland-bsl.org\)](http://contactscotland-bsl.org)

For further information on this report please contact:

nss.feedback@nhs.scot

or

Tom McHugh, Shared Services Manager at tom.mchugh@nhs.scot

Mobile 07779974036