

## News release

For immediate release, 5 December 2023

### NHS Forth Valley needs sustained improvement

NHS Forth Valley has responded well since the Scottish Government took formal oversight of the board's work. But it is critical that the board continues to make progress.

The Scottish Government put in place an assurance board at NHS Forth Valley in November 2022 to drive improvement. The decision was taken after NHS Forth Valley leaders were unable to tackle a range of performance-related issues.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland had repeatedly raised serious concerns about patient safety. The Scottish Government had also noted concerns about a range of NHS Forth Valley's services, including out of hours care, unscheduled care and mental health.

The board has made progress since agreeing an improvement plan. Its leadership team also remained largely consistent during 2022/23, but the Chief Executive announced her intention to retire in September 2023. An interim Chief Executive has been appointed, who was formerly Chief Nursing Officer for the Scottish Government and Chief Executive of NHS Grampian.

**Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland**, said:

"The board has responded positively to the escalation framework and has put appropriate governance arrangements in place.

"It is critical that sustained progress is made under the new leadership and sufficient resources are in place to drive forward the change needed."

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#### Notes to Editor:

1. The Auditor General has prepared the report on NHS Forth Valley's audited accounts for 2022/23 under Section 22 of the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. This allows the Auditor General to bring to the Parliament's and the public's attention matters of public interest related to the financial statements of public bodies.
2. Section 22 reports are submitted to Scottish Ministers for laying in the Parliament along with the accounts of the relevant body. While there are statutory deadlines for these reports, the actual timing of publication is determined by when the report is laid in the Scottish Parliament by Scottish Ministers.

**3.** Exhibit 1 in the Auditor General's s22 report on NHS Forth Valley provides a timeline of significant events surrounding the decision to escalate NHS Forth Valley. It includes reported concerns around patient safety by Health Improvement Scotland, as well as other issues, that the board was not able to address.

**4.** Progress since concerns were raised about NHS Forth Valley's performance include:

- Board leaders taking part in a Culture Change and Compassionate Leadership programme;
- The Chair of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde undertaking an independent review of the Board and Assurance Committee governance arrangements
- New performance management meetings put in place for board Directorates and Health and Social Care Partnerships to manage and monitor performance.

**5.** NHS Forth Valley is also facing a £40m budget gap in 2023/24. It has identified £25 million in savings, £10 million of which are expected to be recurring. But a deficit of over £15 million remains. These financial challenges are not unique to Forth Valley and are being felt by boards across Scotland.

**6.** Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Auditor General for Scotland. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at [www.audit-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk)

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