

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-2024



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This review serves as an opportunity to reflect on our collective progress as an organisation and the key priorities for the year ahead.

Our commitment to being adaptable, creative and responsive to the needs of the workforce and the communities we serve remains unchanged. The feedback will help us improve education and learning by using technology and innovation to advance health and social care for learners, educators, partners, and stakeholders.

Together, we will continue to strive towards our goal of creating a workforce that is fit for the future, meeting the needs of staff, carers, and the people of Scotland

David Garbutt, Board Chair

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**David Garbutt**  
Board Chair



**Karen Reid**  
Chief Executive

## Introduction

The NHS Education for Scotland (NES) Annual Review for April 2023 to March 2024 took place on Friday 15 November 2024. The Annual Review allows the Scottish Government to assess each Health Board's performance over the year. Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, Maree Todd MSP, chaired the NES Review.

NES Chair Dr David Garbutt and Chief Executive Professor Karen Reid presented an overview of performance, key developments, and upcoming plans.

## Governance

During 2023/24, NES made significant advancements in governance to support the NES Board. These developments included the induction of four new Non-Executive Directors, completing the Blueprint Self-Assessment 2023 and corresponding Board Workshop, and creating the Corporate Governance Blueprint Improvement Plan in March 2024.

NES also further developed its Whistleblowing arrangements.

## Workforce

NES continued to support its workforce, which is reflected in several key metrics: an Employee Engagement Index of 85% (national average of 77%), a NES Response Rate of 88% (national average of 59%), and a Staff Retention Rate of 93.3%. Additionally, Essential Learning compliance grew from 69% to 87%, and the Sickness Absence Rate was maintained at 2.6%. The Carer Positive Employer status was also awarded.

NES is a major employer within NHS Scotland, employing over 3,000 staff. 1,974 of these are doctors and dentists in training, and 1,207 are education and support staff.

During 2023/24, NES demonstrated significant strategic growth by expanding its workforce and undertaking numerous new commissions from the Scottish Government. The organisation saw increased staff numbers, notably within the NES Technology Service and Workforce Directorate, bolstering its capacity to deliver on critical digital and workforce development projects. NES also streamlined its employment model for doctors and dentists in training, consolidating employers to enhance efficiency. Additionally, NES's commitment to educational excellence was reflected in providing placement opportunities to over 17,000 learners across various clinical disciplines. This strategic expansion and optimisation of resources underscore NES's pivotal role in advancing Scotland's health and social care landscape.

## Financial Performance

In the fiscal year 2023/24, NES demonstrated strategic leadership by managing a complex budget exceeding £0.7 billion, achieving key financial targets, and implementing critical cost-saving measures. Our focused efforts on financial

stewardship, including a net underspend against the Resource Limit and significant reductions in discretionary spending, highlight our commitment to sustainable financial practices.

Coupled with strategic workforce expansion and enhanced educational provisions, these initiatives underscore NES's pivotal role in advancing Scotland's health and social care landscape, ensuring that we continue to meet and exceed our strategic objectives while adapting to the evolving fiscal environment.

## Key Achievements

NES has demonstrated achievements in advancing its mission to support the health and social care workforce. During 2023-24 we have supported training for over 17,000 learners, ensuring a well-equipped and resilient health and social care workforce.

Guided by the NES Strategy 2023-2026, the organisation has strategically expanded its workforce, enhanced educational provisions, and maintained robust governance. The development of the NES Roadmap has been instrumental in achieving an 84% delivery rate of our Annual Delivery Plan.

Strategic Key Performance Indicators aligned with the NES Strategy were introduced in four key areas: people, learners and trainees, partnerships, and performance.

We initiated the development of a NES Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy to support the broader NHS Scotland initiative addressing the climate emergency. We also delivered a reduction in CO2 emissions linked to staff and business travel and launched an Electric Vehicle salary sacrifice scheme.

## National Learning Infrastructure

Through our learning infrastructure NES provides national educational, learning and workforce development resources to support health and social care staff improve their digital skills, and their confidence in supporting people they work with to improve their own health and wellbeing.

### Digital Learning Platform

Our digital learning platform provides ready access to high quality learning and education that meets the requirements of the health and social care workforce. Through enhancing the skills and knowledge of health and care professionals, we play a crucial role in improving the quality of care provided across Scotland and ensure that the health and social care workforce is well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of our population.

During 2023/24 the NES digital learning platform had around 4.2 million accesses to learning products and approximately 750,000 monthly accesses. It is a vital resource for over 450,000 users across health, social care, public, and third-sector organisations.

NES also supported the health and social care sectors through the Knowledge and Skills Framework for healthcare support workers (bands 2 to 4), providing essential knowledge and skills across four pillars of practice and supported specialised training.

Engagement with the Caring for Smiles SCQF oral health qualifications aimed at care home workers has been very positive, with 2,972 staff completing Level 5 and 149 completing Level 6. Additionally, 54,212 staff have participated in training for the Caring for Smiles initiative. Two Open Badges are also now available - one aimed at care home staff and the other at care at home services.

In pharmacy we are developing independent prescribing capacity and clinical skills across the workforce, with 83% of acute pharmacists, 90% of primary care pharmacists, and 35% of community pharmacists now qualified as an Independent Prescriber or in training.

### **The National Digital Library for Health and Social Care**

The National Digital Library for Health and Social Care enhances the quality of Scotland's health and social care services by ensuring the workforce is well-informed and equipped with the latest evidence. It is also an essential source of knowledge and information for the development and education of the workforce. This contributes to better outcomes for people using these services and supports overall health and social care improvement nationally.

In 2023/24 we launched the Equality, Diversity, and Human Rights module developed in partnership with health and social care organisations. Since its introduction in December 2023, over 19,000 staff members have completed the module, exemplifying our commitment to fostering an inclusive workforce. In addition, collaborative efforts with Social Security Scotland have resulted in vital resources such as a Turas landing page, effectively serving social security staff's learning and development needs.

With funding from the Scottish Government, NES and the Scottish Social Services Council are collaborating to adapt health education resources on Turas to meet the needs of the social care workforce. A National Induction Framework for adult social care in Scotland will also provide essential training for new hires - helping employers onboard staff effectively and ensuring high-quality practice.

Integrating NHS Scotland workforce data into the Turas Platform has been instrumental in personalising user experiences and optimising workforce insights. The Scottish Infection Prevention and Control Education Pathway has garnered substantial engagement, with 1.7 million page views from 133 Scottish organisations.

Furthermore, our psychological trauma learning events, complemented by e-module completions, have cumulatively engaged 40,668 participants, underscoring our dedication to comprehensive health education and support.

## NES Deanery

The NES Deanery works in partnership with health boards and GP practices to train doctors and dentists to be the senior clinicians we need to treat Scotland's people in the future. Our role is to ensure that these doctors and dentists in training are given the right opportunities and experience to equip them to be highly effective and capable practitioners delivering the best care possible.

The NES Medical Directorate oversees the training programmes for nearly 7,000 doctors in Scotland, ensuring high training standards and a competent medical workforce. We collaborate with stakeholders to refine and deliver the necessary workforce for Scotland's population.

During 202/24 we received positive feedback from the General Medical Council's Annual Review, which highly regarded NES's quality management system. In the National Training Survey, Scotland was number one in the overall four nations satisfaction rankings. We have also increased the number of sites on the high performers list.

The Whole Time Equivalent recruitment model supports patient and doctor experiences by focusing on workforce equivalents. In this model, 1,862 medical trainees completed their core or higher training programmes, reflecting a 6% increase. Additionally, 92% of trainees successfully progressed. Our medical revalidation efforts ensure that 7,500 doctors remain up-to-date and fit to practice.

Through our programme of Medical Education Reform work, we aim to align training models with national and international standards, integrate new technologies, and promote equitable education, benefiting fill rates of higher specialty posts and supporting a robust medical workforce.

## Clinical Skills Managed Education Network

The Clinical Skills Managed Educational Network (CSMEN) was established in 2007 to support excellence in clinical skills education. Our multi-professional approach fosters collaboration and provides a unified approach to skills and simulation learning across Scotland. In 2023, four mobile skills units (MSUs) trained 1,032 participants over 188 sessions, with 91% rating the training as 'excellent' and 99.6% finding it beneficial. Participants included nursing (37%), Scottish Ambulance Service (24%), medical fields (11%) and members of the public (9%).

In 2023, over 13,000 teaching hours covered 100 medical simulation courses in 14 specialties, with more than 1,500 participants. Monthly training days for core surgical trainees saw over 360 attendances, improving patient care and reducing costs. CSMEN's online resources were accessed 3,810 times.

During 2023/24 the CSMEN received the ASPIRE award for excellence to simulation training; successful mobile skill unit; and ability to create resources at speed during a national emergency. The ASPIRE award programme by AMEE (The International Association for Health Professions Education) was established to go beyond the traditional accreditation process, and to identify, recognise and reward world-class excellence in education. The aim of the programme is to highlight, showcase and



exemplify best-practice in health professions education, improving the education process and outcomes of other institutions around the world.

## **Continuing Professional Development**

Through our continuing professional development opportunities, NES supports healthcare professionals in becoming knowledgeable, skilled, and able to deliver high-quality care and outcomes.

### **Skills Development Scotland**

NES is committed to enhancing the competencies of healthcare professionals through its strategic partnerships and accredited programmes. Recognised by Skills Development Scotland (SDS), NES delivers high-quality training and apprenticeship programmes, which include vocational qualifications and continuing professional development opportunities. These initiatives ensure that healthcare staff are well-equipped to provide exceptional care, improving patient outcomes and overall healthcare services in Scotland. Collaborations with SDS, colleges, health boards, and community pharmacy facilitate a unified approach to pharmacy technician training, while achieving "Very Good" outcomes in key domains of SDS's Quality Review for dental nursing and pharmacy services frameworks further underscore NES's dedication to excellence in healthcare education.

### **NES SQA Approved Centre**

The NES SQA Approved Centre strategically delivers accredited vocational qualifications that adhere to the stringent standards set by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Through continuous quality controls and management, the Centre ensures that healthcare professionals receive credit-rated programmes that enhance their knowledge, skills, and competencies, thus improving patient care and outcomes. Our collaboration with SQA and stakeholders has created new Professional Development Awards (PDAs) at SCQF Level 8 in Dental Practice Management and Education, Training and Assessment, underscoring our commitment to advancing healthcare education. Furthermore, delivering the Enhanced Psychological Practice programme to 74 learners in 2023/24 exemplifies our dedication to equipping healthcare staff with the necessary expertise to meet evolving healthcare demands.

### **NES Annual Conference**

The NES Annual Conference, held virtually in April 2024, was a pivotal event that brought together 1,730 healthcare professionals across Scotland to engage in comprehensive learning and collaboration. With 91 sessions featuring 328 presenters and a selection of 56 seminar abstracts and 147 open papers and posters, the conference addressed contemporary health trends and challenges. This event facilitated the continuous professional development of over 1,700 staff members and fostered a unified approach to healthcare education and practice. The impact of the conference was profound, evidenced by excellent participant feedback, which highlighted the opportunity to engage with peers and the diverse range of topics covered.

## **GP Fellowships**

NES offers a variety of fellowship opportunities for healthcare professionals' interests and career aspirations. These include Rural, Medical Education, Health Inequality, and GP Clinical Academic Fellowships. Each fellowship allows participants to gain specialised experience in their chosen field while continuing to develop generalist skills. For instance, the Rural Fellowships provide doctors with practical experience in remote and rural areas, whereas Medical Education Fellowships offer teaching and educational development exposure. Similarly, Health Inequality Fellowships focus on delivering care in deprived areas, and GP Clinical Academic Fellowships provide research experience alongside primary care practice.

The Scottish Clinical Leadership Fellowships (SCLF) and the Allied Health Professions (AHP) Fellowship Scheme play a crucial role in developing leadership skills among healthcare professionals. The SCLF provides doctors and dentists with opportunities to work closely with leading figures in NHS Scotland, gaining practical experience in organisational leadership. The AHP Fellowship Scheme supports career development for AHPs through project-based expertise and a structured learning programme. Fellows from these programs report enhanced leadership, strategic networking, problem-solving skills, and increased engagement with service users. Both schemes are integral to nurturing the next generation of leaders in Scotland's healthcare sector.

## **Leadership and Talent Management**

### **NHS Scotland Board Development**

In 2023/24, NES has supported senior leadership development within NHS Scotland through several key initiatives. The organisation has rolled out the 'Blueprint for Good Governance' workshops and the Aspiring Chairs Programme to enhance governance practices. The 'Leading in a Digital Age' workshops, tailored for Executive and Non-Executive Board members, underscore NES's commitment to equipping leaders with the necessary skills to navigate the digital transformation in healthcare. These initiatives, funded by the Scottish Government, reflect NES's dedication to fostering effective and innovative leadership across Scotland's health and care sector.

### **Succession Planning for Senior Leaders Role**

NES implemented a comprehensive succession planning programme for senior leaders, focusing on the Leadership Success Profile and the Aspiring Chief Executive (ACE) programme. This initiative encompasses executive coaching, development centres, and tailored support tools, ultimately promoting seven individuals into high-level roles, including substantive and interim Chief Executive positions. With continued expansion, this strategy aims to ensure a robust pipeline of qualified leaders equipped to navigate the complexities of the healthcare sector, fostering a culture of effective and innovative leadership across Scotland's public services.

### **Leading for the Future**

The Leading for the Future programme enhances senior leadership across health, social care, social work, and third-sector organisations in Scotland. By focusing on

consistent demonstration of leadership capabilities, the programme empowers participants to effectively deliver service objectives, understand the complexities of leadership within dynamic systems, generate innovative solutions to persistent challenges, and manage partnerships across public services. This experiential approach encourages adaptive leadership, fostering a significant improvement in participants' leadership abilities and capabilities, as evidenced by the impressive gains reported by recent cohorts on completing the programme - 44% improvement in their capabilities and 35% improvement in their abilities.

### **You as a Collaborative Leader**

The 'You as a Collaborative Leader' (YACL) programme continues to foster leadership excellence across health and social care sectors. Through a combination of workshops, peer thinking sets, and individual coaching, participants have experienced significant improvements in their leadership capabilities, specifically in dealing with leadership challenges (45% increase), leading collaboratively (34% increase), and enhancing cross-sector relationships (23% increase). With an overwhelming number of high-quality applications and a rigorous selection process, the programme successfully recruited two balanced cohorts, ensuring a diverse mix of roles, sectors, and geographies. The sustained high ratings and positive feedback highlight the programme's effectiveness and its crucial role in shaping integrated care leadership.

### **Graduate Management Training Scheme**

The Graduate Management Training Scheme plays a crucial role in shaping the future leaders of NHS Scotland by offering a comprehensive insight into health and social care delivery and management. Trainees develop essential operational and strategic competencies through various placements, supported by academic qualifications and personal development packages. The programme emphasises mentorship, peer support, and career coaching, providing a robust foundation for participants to thrive in senior roles. With senior sponsorship from NHS executives, the scheme ensures a smooth transition from training to employment, aiming to secure top talent for long-term contributions to public services. Moving towards a regional model, the scheme will continue to adapt and evolve to meet the needs of Scotland's health and care system.

In 2023, the Graduate Management Training Scheme concluded, with eight participants securing offers from NHS Scotland Boards. In 2025 we will proceed with a cohort of four with recruitment going live in February 2025.

## **Data and Digital**

NES's role as the official provider of workforce statistics and strategic delivery partner of Scottish Government on technology and information resources is growing to meet the pressures faced by health and social care and societal need.

### **National Provider of Workforce Statistics**

NES is the national provider of workforce statistics for NHS Scotland. This role supports and informs recruitment and retention strategies across the system. It has



also increased the accuracy of analytical and reporting workloads, while reducing the administrative effort required to achieve them.

During 2023/24 we launched a new workforce planning tool to assist workforce planners in comparing employment and establishment forecasts. This tool estimates the size and timing of vacancies in secondary care across NHS Scotland at national, regional and local levels. We have also progressed work to access new and updated workforce data from the National HR System on a daily rather than weekly basis, along with access to a larger workforce data set.

### **National Digital Platform**

Launched in 2022, the National Digital Platform (NDP) supports technology for health and social care, aiming to make information and services more accessible. The platform is a collaborative effort by NES and partners across health and social care.

The NDP enables the public to have greater access and control over their health data, while professionals gain wider access to data supporting care. In 2023/24, the NDP captured over 4.4 million vaccination events. Through the Scottish Vaccination Improvement Programme, it could provide a lifelong vaccination record for every person in Scotland.

This year, we also supported the Scan for Safety Programme, which will make implanted medical devices digitally trackable and traceable nationally by providing standards-based clinical data and patient record identification capability to be reused by other programmes.

### **ANIA Digital Dermatology Programme**

The Accelerated National Innovation Adoption (ANIA) Pathway is a collaborative initiative focused on fast-tracking the adoption of proven technological innovations across NHS Scotland. ANIA ensures the quick and safe rollout of technological innovations that will improve patient outcomes, reduce waiting times and improve patient and staff experience. Working collaboratively with ANIA partners, NES directly contributes to the accelerated adoption of proven technological innovation in the transformation of services on a Once for Scotland basis through a skilled and motivated workforce.

Developed in 2023/24, the Digital Dermatology Programme pathway helps dermatologists to carry out robust referral triage without the patient being present, by including images as part of the referral process between primary and secondary care. This has helped to speed up diagnosis and reduce waiting lists.

### **NHS Scotland Careers Website**

Managed by NES, the NHS Scotland Careers website provides a central point for information and resources on careers within NHS Scotland. It enhances visibility of job opportunities and career pathways and is a key element in workforce recruitment and attraction.

During 2023/24 the NHS Scotland Careers website was accessed 0.5 million times, with over 100,000 engaged sessions per quarter.

## National Commissions

As a national Board and delivery partner, NES takes forward a range of commissions from the Scottish Government, which support the achievement of ministerial priorities and policy ambitions.

### National Centre for Remote and Rural Health and Care

The National Centre for Remote and Rural works in partnership with territorial health boards, national health boards, and communities to support the Scottish Government's ambition of thriving primary care across rural Scotland.

The Centre supports remote, rural, and island health boards to improve service delivery, reduce healthcare inequalities, and increase access to high-quality care. It achieves this by promoting excellence in education, training, research, leadership, and practice in remote and rural healthcare.

Since October 2023, the Centre has:

- Met all initial deliverables within six months
- Implemented practical skills development programmes
- Supported sustainable workforce and service models
- Helped improve recruitment and retention strategies.

### Centre for Workforce Supply

The Centre for Workforce Supply (CWS) enhances workforce supply in Scotland's health and social care sector to meet healthcare demands. Since 2021, it has aided the international recruitment of over 1000 nurses, midwives, and AHP professionals, with a 95.9% retention rate. During 2023/24 we successfully developed a pilot model for recruiting social care staff internationally, supporting five providers to recruit 40 staff into the social care sector.

### Digitally Enabled Workforce Programme

The Digitally Enabled Workforce (DEW) Programme is a vital initiative to enhance digital skills and leadership in Scotland's health and social care sector. Key achievements include the DEW team and the University of Edinburgh winning awards at DigiFest Scotland, completing the master's programme 'Leading Digital Transformation in Health and Care for Scotland MSc' with 48 participants from 31 organisations, and involving 240 individuals in the Digital Health and Care Leadership Programme across three cohorts.

Digital Mindset Board Development sessions attracted 98 attendees, with five webinars drawing 818 registrations. The digital and data skills resource hub, piloted by over 500 users, now offers 200 resources, while the Professional Development Award in Technology-Enabled Care funded two cohorts with 80 participants.

Collaborations with the Scottish Government led to the creation of two national online learning modules and new sites on Turas Learn. Furthermore, the Microsoft 365 Skills Hub serves over 17,000 monthly users, and the KIND Learning Network, with over 1,300 members, has hosted 169 sessions with 2,515 attendees.

### **National Trauma Transformation Programme**

The National Trauma Transformation Programme supports public sector agencies to embed trauma-informed approaches across their workforce. It also supports implementation across the NHS through developing a wide range of learning resources, guidance, and implementation support, including for NHS leaders.

During 2023/24 there have been 119,148 online engagements – this includes all e-module completions, resource downloads and video/animation views – and 3,273 participants in live training, webinar and workshop deliveries.

### **Leading to Change**

Leading to Change (L2C) is a programme that offers leadership development opportunities and support for leaders in the health, social care, and social work sectors in Scotland. This includes development programmes, events, resources, a podcast channel and signposts to coaching and mentoring.

During 2023/24 45 aspiring leaders within health and social care were supported through the programme, with 929 events delivered to support leaders at all levels across the system.

### **Armed Forces Talent Programme**

The Armed Forces Talent Programme (AFTP) is strategically designed to harness the unique skill set of the military community, facilitating their transition into NHS Scotland roles. By participating in 22 events, the AFTP has successfully raised awareness and engaged 183 members of the Armed Forces Community, addressing critical workforce challenges. The programme's efforts to track applications, interviews, and job offers underscore its commitment to integrating highly skilled veterans, service leavers, and their families into the health and social care sector, ultimately enhancing the quality of healthcare services across Scotland.

### **Value Based Health and Care / Realistic Medicine**

In alignment with our overarching goal of fostering a resilient and capable health and social care workforce, we have strategically integrated Realistic Medicine and value-based health and care principles into our training and development programmes. This initiative includes embedding these concepts within non-executive induction programmes, board development sites, and senior leadership gateway apps.

In addition, we have developed seven eLearning resources and connected with all Higher Education Institutions in Scotland, identifying four early adopter sites. These efforts collectively aim to enhance the quality of healthcare delivery and ensure better outcomes for the people of Scotland.

### **NHS Scotland Academy**

The NHS Scotland Academy (NHSSA) is a partnership between NHS Golden Jubilee and NES to offer accelerated training for a wide range of health and social care roles and professions.

During 2023/24 the NHSSA provided training opportunities for over 6,000 learners who currently work, or are aspiring to work, in roles in health and social care. In addition, the digital learning modules provided by the Academy for people new to

roles in health and social care have been used by over 4,000 learners in the last 12 months.

New nurses and midwives recruited to NHS Scotland from overseas are required to pass a Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) Examination as part of the registration process to work independently in the UK. Over 600 learners from Boards across Scotland have used the NHSSA resources for Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) preparation in the last 12 months. Over 200 existing NHS staff have used the resources designed to help them support their new recruits through the process. Over 600 learners have used the Cultural Humility resource since its launch on 24 November 2023.

In 2023/24 the NHSSA has provided additional clinical skills training opportunities for around 400 existing primary care colleagues who have been upskilled to prescribe and dispense in the community without the need for a GP or A&E appointment.

### **National Endoscopy Training Programme**

The NHS Scotland Academy has provided over 200 additional training opportunities to existing NHS staff (mainly senior medical trainees and Consultants) through its National Endoscopy Training Programme. These include technical and non-technical skills. The programme includes delivery of immersive training lists, through which an additional 1,800 patients have accessed a procedure they had been waiting for.

### **National Ultrasound Training Programme**

Through its National Ultrasound Training Programme, NHS Scotland Academy has provided additional training opportunities for 25 new ultrasonographers and 26 doctors in training at ST1-6. The immersive training lists provided by this programme have enabled 5,500 patients to receive ultrasound procedures they had been waiting for.

## **Working in Partnership**

NES expanded its strategic partnerships and collaborations with external partners, integrating the approach into the health, social care, education and skills sectors.

These partnerships and collaborations include:-

- Universities (Open University in Scotland, University of St Andrews, Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of Highlands and Islands, the University of Dundee, and Robert Gordon University)
- Scottish Funding Council, Scottish Qualification Authority and Skills Development Scotland.
- Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre and UK Health Data Research Alliance
- COSLA, SOLACE, Social Security Scotland, and Scottish Social Services Council

## **Future sustainability of the health and social care workforce**

NES is committed to meeting the needs of the health and social care workforce, both now and into the future, responding to changes in our operating environment and the health needs of our population. Looking ahead our priorities will build on the direction set out in our NES Strategy 2023-26, by developing and delivering initiatives in:

- technology and innovation
- exploring and maximising the role of artificial intelligence
- further developing our digital learning infrastructure and approaches which embed sustainability in education
- workforce diversification
- medical education reform.