

Report to:	Social Work Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	6 December 2023
Report by:	Director, Health and Social Care

Subject:	Planning for Winter 2023/2024
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide the Social Work Resources Committee with an update on and confirm support for the planning arrangements being put in place to ensure Health and Social Care Services are prepared as reasonably as they can be for the coming winter months – with particular recognition of the uncertainties and potential impacts that still remain relating to inclement weather, Covid 19, influenza, financial pressures, cost of living issues and other concurrent risks against the backdrop of major pre-existing system-wide pressures

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the planning arrangements which have been put in place to ensure Health and Social Care Services are prepared for the winter months and the associated costs associated with same are noted;
- (2) that the potential need for additional support to mitigate the wider impacts of winter across all public services are noted; and
- (3) that the ongoing work with the Scottish Government to confirm the financial arrangements is noted.

3. Background

3.1. Committee members have previously been provided with a briefing on the most recent national Audit Scotland Report on Social Care. This national report described the significant challenges facing the sustainability of social care in Scotland; the degree to which those challenges resonate across the Health and Social Care system as a whole; and the consequent imperatives for evidence-based and values-based transformation.

3.2. Annual 'whole system' planning is undertaken in preparing Health and Social Care Services in such a way as to mitigate the risks normally associated with winter. The Lanarkshire Health and Social Care system – in common with that across Scotland - continues to face significant challenges. Last winter, health and social care services and staff had to contend with some of the most extreme winter pressures ever known, many of which continue to be issues for the system.

- 3.3. Planning for Winter 2023/24 commenced in August 2023 and, as in previous years, is undertaken in accordance with national guidance. The Lanarkshire approach to winter planning is a multi-agency approach across NHS Lanarkshire, North and South Lanarkshire Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) and both Councils together with the respective supports (for example, the Scottish Ambulance Service and NHS 24).
- 3.4. Given the level of unpredictability in the Health and Social Care sectors as well as in the wider public system, this year's Winter Plan has been developed as – and should be understood to be – a dynamic plan and one that is highly likely to be subject to change over the coming months. This has also been recognised from a Local Resilience Planning (LRP) perspective and a specific exercise was undertaken on 9 November 2023 to test system-wide planning. Additionally, work undertaken last year by NHS Lanarkshire to take account of the increasingly likely eventuality of a number of concurrent risks which may well align to create increased system pressure has also been utilised as part of the wider winter planning process. These risks include, inter alia, further waves of Covid 19; increased prevalence of flu and other respiratory infections - both in relation to infectivity and impact; uptake and efficacy of vaccination programmes; workforce shortages in all sectors and grades across the Health and Social Care sector; public health impact of cost of living crisis/fuel costs and subsequent demand on health and care services; inclement weather and available finances.

4. Winter Work Streams

4.1. National Guidance / Scottish Government Correspondence

- 4.1.1. On 22 August 2023, the Scottish Government hosted a national Winter Resilience event which highlighted a range of examples of good practice that could be considered as part of winter planning. The vast majority of these examples related to supporting good system flow all year round and many are already in place in a Lanarkshire context, however, learning from the event will be built into the Lanarkshire plan for 2023/24.
- 4.1.2. National guidance was subsequently published on 24 October 2023 which set out the national expectations for those areas that local winter plans would be expected to address.
- 4.1.3. Some funding has been made available centrally in 2023/24 to support winter planning as well as some monies managed internally as part of the respective financial plans to anticipate winter pressures. Following discussion between the NHS Lanarkshire Director of Finance, the two Chief Financial Officers of the IJBs and Council Finance colleagues, funding to manage the impact of winter and ongoing pressures has been identified and further detail is set out at item 6 below.

4.2. Approach to Winter Planning 2023/24

- 4.2.1. Whilst the winter plan will be a Lanarkshire wide plan, it is being structured in two main parts for 2023/24. This is to recognise the significant work underway currently as part of Operation Flow 2 – which is aimed at maximising flow through acute hospitals and associated care pathways. Continuation and emphasis of particular aspects of this work will form the basis of the winter planning for acute hospital services. All other aspects of the Lanarkshire wide winter plan will be undertaken in the normal way via the multi-sectorial/multi-agency winter planning group. Representation from acute services/Operation Flow forms part of the wider group to ensure all necessary synergies are recognised and planning is appropriately integrated.

4.2.2. **Acute Services/Unscheduled Care Winter Planning through Operation Flow 2**

As the primary objective of the task and finish groups established to scope and develop proposals relating to Operation Flow, work has commenced to transition to delivery structures to support this work. A hospital sector based structure will ensure a whole system approach. However, it is also recognised that there are some elements of the plan that are pan-Lanarkshire e.g. the Flow Navigation Centre (FNC) development and will require some flexibility in the approach to support delivery.

In winter 2022/23, a successful Firebreak was undertaken to relieve pressure across the system. A similar 'Firebreak' was undertaken week commencing 20 November 2023 such that additional flow might be identified and an associated 'de-compression' of the hospital sites. This 'Firebreak' is different than the one undertaken earlier this year and reflects system learning from that time. However, further data analysis to help inform on-going decision making around timing, cost, impact and risk assessment is required and this work will be progressing throughout the winter period.

Colleagues from NHS Tayside also provided a peer support visit to NHS Lanarkshire and the two Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) to review the new target operating models and winter plans to determine if there were any further opportunities for improvement and shared learning. This visit took place on the 7 and 8 September 2023 and the associated learning has been included as part of the wider Operation Flow and winter planning processes.

4.2.3. As well as a refocus on the Six Essential Actions (nationally developed with the Academy of Royal Colleges) there are a further six main areas where active consideration is now being given to opportunities to support increase "flow" through the system. It should be noted that these areas are all consistent with the Scottish Government guidance referred to above:

- Hospital at Home - review of the current model and consideration of opportunities for expansion of service.
- Frailty – pathway development to support admission avoidance and early discharge.
- Development of a community-based Urgent Care Service.
- Development of Minors Service Hub.
- Expansion of the scope of the Flow Navigation Centre (FNC – see below).
- Development of Discharge Ward Model / Commissioned Beds.

4.2.4. Both Chief Officers of the North and South Lanarkshire IJBs are also closely involved in the Urgent and Unscheduled Care work stream. This is in recognition of the fact that currently almost 95% of patients are discharged from hospital without delay; and, accordingly, it is very important to whole system "flow" that acute services are delivered as efficiently as possible alongside expanding the capacity of and transforming the delivery of more services in the community.

4.3. **Discharge Without Delay**

4.3.1. Work continues in the enactment of the Discharge Without Delay programme and its related aspects, e.g. embedding of Planned Date of Discharge; consistent roll out of Home First; increased numbers of people being supported to die at home via 'pathway 4' and further work with third sector providers.

4.3.2. Similarly, work being undertaken by the Home Assessment Team in North Lanarkshire has also made significant improvements in the number of people able to be supported out of hospital with no/little delay.

4.3.3. Through the development and embedding of the 'Home First' model in South Lanarkshire HSCP, additional capacity is being created to support the review of the Care at Home service. This is seeing an increase in the number of people who are being supported to be rehabilitated to a level of being able to manage their own care independently or, in some instances, with a reduced level of care than may have been originally assessed when in the hospital or first referred.

4.4. Social Care Provider Sustainability

4.4.1. Independent providers of social care in Scotland – notably care homes and care at home providers – have highlighted the extremely difficult operating environment. As well as the cost-of-living-crisis and the lasting impact of measures introduced during the management of the pandemic, vacancy pressures also continue to be a concern for a number of providers.

4.4.2. Both HSCPs and their respective Councils have taken steps to augment their scanning of the care home provider environment and provide additional support proportionate to the demands on in-house provision, available resources (noting the social care workforce challenges) and statutory/legal parameters. Within South Lanarkshire, ongoing actions include the HSCP convening the providers' forums, and regular meetings with Scottish Care. On a Lanarkshire-wide basis, support and quality assurance for Care Homes continues on a whole system basis to be overseen by the pan-Lanarkshire Care Home Assurance Tactical (CHAT) Group; and for Care at Home Services through the equivalent Care at Home Oversight Group. The Care Inspectorate participates in both of these meetings.

4.5. General Practice and Pharmacy Opening

4.5.1. As in previous years, a local enhanced service to support general practices opening on the fourth day of the weekend/public holidays – that is, on 26 December and 2 January as well as the Saturdays through January 2024 - will be offered. There will also be an extended public holiday pharmacy service available to ensure that people can both access prescriptions as well as being available for re-direction from NHS24, the Primary Care Out of Hours (PCOOH) Service, Emergency Departments and the FNC where possible.

4.6. General Practice Sustainability

4.6.1. As is recognised as the situation across Scotland, general practices across Lanarkshire are experiencing more pressure than at any point in their history.

4.6.2. Work ongoing to address capacity and demand – most notably, through the Primary Care Improvement Plan (PCIP) that is reported through to the IJB and NHS Lanarkshire Board as per the expectations within the General Medical Services (GMS) Contract.

4.6.3. As part of the regular reporting to Government on system pressures through the winter period, there will be weekly updates on the numbers of practices where they believe they are unable to provide the full range of services that they would under 'normal' working conditions.

4.7. Primary Care Out of Hours

4.7.1. For a considerable period, and similar to most Scottish out of hours services, the NHS Lanarkshire PCOOH Service has had to manage workforce availability challenges (notably in relation to GPs); and has regularly had to contend with escalating levels of demand.

4.7.2. The new clinical model has assisted the PCOOH Service to move to a more multi-disciplinary workforce and competency-based model of care, thereby reducing the number of occasions when alternative arrangements have been introduced. This will also be enhanced over the winter period to ensure additional staff are available to manage the additional demand that can be anticipated across the peak activity periods in winter.

4.8. **Contingency Arrangements for Additional Deaths**

4.8.1. As set out within national guidance and is the case every year, work is underway – including with local undertakers - to ensure that there is sufficient ‘pace’ of funeral services (both burials and cremations) to support the eventuality of a significant excess of deaths over the winter period. Additional mortuary capacity identified for Covid 19 is still in place and will continue to be available over this winter period if required.

4.9. **Covid 19 and Flu Vaccine Programme**

4.9.1. Following final advice on the winter Covid 19 booster programme from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the following groups are being offered an additional Covid 19 booster:

- Residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults.
- Frontline Health and Social Care workers.
- All adults aged 65 years and over.
- Those aged 5 to 49 years in a clinical risk group, including those who are pregnant.
- Those aged 5 to 49 years who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression.
- Flu vaccines will be available to a wider range of individuals, including all >50 year olds.

4.9.2 The programme is well advanced and take up of vaccines is on target to be consistent with national performance. In addition to this, there is a range of services designed to offer vaccines to any who are in geographical areas or part of a thematic group where take up of vaccine is less than hoped for.

4.10. **Carers Support**

4.10.1. The Committee has been previously updated on the utilisation of funding from the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 allocation 2023/2024 to enhance operational services for carers in South Lanarkshire. This included monies from this funding being directed to support ongoing work with carers in South Lanarkshire, with a particular emphasis on the Self-Directed Support (SDS) agenda; and a strengthened internal capacity within the HSCP to enable frontline staff in managing increasing demand with regards to supporting carers.

4.11. **Staff Wellbeing**

4.11.1. NHS Lanarkshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy will form an integral part of the system wide winter plan, with the emphasis on providing a working environment in all areas across Health and Social Care where staff are able to enhance and maintain their personal and professional wellbeing and to reach their full potential in a culture that provides space, time and support for self-care.

4.11.2.The Strategy supports the shared vision of ensuring that staff health and wellbeing is embedded fully and championed at all levels across the respective organisations. To increase visibility and awareness of staff health and wellbeing platforms, Staff Health and Wellbeing week was designed to showcase the support, resources, initiatives and opportunities currently provided to help support staff to manage their health and wellbeing. Again, like the wider approach to winter planning, this recognises pressures which are system-wide; and a shared approach to manage the dynamic between the imperative to maintain staff health and well-being alongside the significant demand being placed on health and social care services.

4.11.3.South Lanarkshire Council employees can also access a range of materials to support health and wellbeing through the employee wellbeing hub and through the 'employee assist' program. In addition, the Council have been awarded a grant from the Workforce Wellbeing fund for Adult Social Work and Social Care. This grant will be used to promote wellbeing at work activities for residential and day care employees.

4.12. Adverse Weather

4.12.1.Adverse Weather events are defined by reference to the Met Office Weather Warning system. NHS Lanarkshire and both North and South Lanarkshire Councils have policies in relation to adverse weather that applies wherever severe weather may obstruct staff from being able to attend work, and/or where severe weather poses a significant risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of staff.

4.12.2.A series of actions is open to the organisations – individually and in collaboration - in managing adverse weather and these have been refined over many years of winter planning. These include working with and through the Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) and with pre-identified voluntary organisations.

4.13. Concurrent Resilience Planning and Risks

4.13.1. As highlighted above, there is a likelihood of concurrent risks aligning to have a significant impact on the wider health and social care services.

4.13.2.Resilience Planners from across the NHS and local government have been collaborating on scoping the range and extent of the mitigating factors introduced to reduce the impact of winter on the overall system. A very well attended 'Winter Breach' event was held on 9 November 2023, organised by Lanarkshire LRP and focussing on the potential disruption caused by severe flooding.

4.13.3.Importantly, there are well-developed escalation processes and prioritisation frameworks in place supported by 'Strategic Command' structures that can be introduced when required. These arrangements provide appropriate and necessary governance for services to be stood down in a planned way in extremis, and thereby ensure a focus on the delivery of essential/core functions and the provision of care for the most vulnerable.

4.14. Communications

4.14.1.Work is underway at both local and national levels on the public message in relation to the different pathways/routes into health care services the public are being asked to follow during the winter months. As will be appreciated from the foregoing range of initiatives, there are many areas where the public will be asked to assist in managing the impact of winter this year. South and North Lanarkshire HSCPs, both Councils and NHS Lanarkshire are actively involved in seeking to ensure the messages are appropriate, shared widely and understood.

- 4.14.2. The key message themes are to ask people to plan ahead; know the different options that are available to them to access urgent care; and to encourage as many people as possible to access the service which is closest to them and least reliant on hospitals and general practices. Communication staff from both Councils are also actively engaged in the advertising campaigns to maximise care staffing recruitment

5. Employee Implications

- 5.1. Learning from recent months and years have underscored the need for continued multi-disciplinary team working to better meet service demands; and the need for a cohesive whole system approach to delivering health and social care going forward. The experience of the pandemic has emphasised the interdependencies between primary care (including independent contractor services), community care, secondary care, and social care; and shown that one component of health and social care delivery being overwhelmed with demand can have consequential knock-on effects on the other component parts of the system.
- 5.2. Previous reports have highlighted the impact of workforce challenges for health and social care – both in South Lanarkshire and across Scotland – that are directly impacting on the ability to fully meet current demand. These supply-side challenges mean that there are continuing difficulties in filling many existing roles across health and social care teams.
- 5.3. As workforce supply challenges persist across health and social care, this has led to increased competition for recruitment and retention at local, regional and national level. This poses an ongoing risk and emphasises the need to develop new and transformational roles in response to growing demand across health and social care to ensure there will be a sustainable supply of workforce to meet future health requirements of an ageing population in Lanarkshire, and across Scotland.
- 5.4. Capacity planning is a key area of action for both South and North Lanarkshire HSCPs and is being supported by both Councils and NHS Lanarkshire. All services are scoping and making contingency arrangements in respect of staffing levels to respond to, and as required, prioritise the potential needs over the period. Additional staff will be sought to cover a number of areas where it is recognised that maximising flow will be essential to maintaining safe systems of care. Work is also progressing on the recruitment of various staff who will support system “flow” across the winter period.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. As described above, there has been a range of funding sources which have been identified and confirmed as being able to support planning for winter 2023/24.
- 6.2. Health and Social care costs associated with each of the attendant parts of planning activities in South Lanarkshire, including NHSL wide primary care services (GPs and Pharmacy) will be around £1.9m.
- 6.3. Future reporting primarily to the South Lanarkshire IJB will confirm the respective costs recognising that staff will not be able to be secured/employed for all the areas which have been identified as ideally having additional staff.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 7.1. There are no implications for Climate Change, sustainability, or the environment in terms of the information contained in this report.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. The proposals contained in this report will contribute to the mitigation of a number of risks within the IJB Risk Register, notably:
- Demand pressures (Very High).
 - Workforce availability (Very High).
 - External provider resilience (High).
- 8.2. Availability of staffing over the peak winter period has been identified as the major risk. There is also work ongoing in predicting the scale and potential impact of Covid 19 and flu on hospital admissions and associated care services. This will form part of the regular review of contingency arrangements and the prioritisation of resources. These risks are heightened by the fact that there is the scope for a series of major risks all to coincide concurrently.
- 8.3. Depending on further advice from Scottish Government as well as local Strategic Command arrangements, it may be necessary to re-prioritise essential/core services and temporarily standing down other services thereby necessarily interrupting the remobilisation process.
- 8.4. There are no other issues associated with this report

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 9.2. This substance of this report has been informed by discussions across both North and South Lanarkshire HSCPs, both Councils, NHS Lanarkshire and LRP partners.

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21 November 2023

Previous References

- ◆ none

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Scottish Government (2023) Winter Resilience Overview 2022-23:

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2022/10/health-social-care-winter-resilience-overview-2022-23/documents/winter-resilience-overview-2022-23/winter-resilience-overview-2022-23/govscot%3Adocument/winter-resilience-overview-2022-23.pdf>

- ◆ Scottish Government (2015) Improving unscheduled care six essential actions

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-unscheduled-care-six-essential-actions/>

- ◆ Audit Scotland (2022) Social Care Briefing

<https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/social-care-briefing>

- ◆ Audit Scotland (2022) NHS in Scotland 2021

<https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/nhs-in-scotland-2021>

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