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Agenda Item: 16.

Integration Joint Board

Date of Meeting: 22 April 2026.

Subject: Subnational Planning and Delivery Committee (East) Update.

1. Purpose

1.1. To provide an update on the Subnational Planning and Delivery Committee (East).

2. Recommendations

The Integration Joint Board is invited to note:

2.1. Progress made by the Subnational Planning and Delivery Committee East (SPDCE).

2.2. That the Scottish Government issued Direction Letter (DL) (2025)25 in November 2025, which mandated Health Boards across Scotland to work more closely on five key priorities and to agree joint plans to deliver these by 31 March 2026.

2.3. That DL (2025)25 is clear that there is no change to the clinical, workforce and financial governance accountabilities of any Health Board.

2.4. That the Ministerial Direction is to bring forward plans by 31 March 2026 against the five key priorities, with the expectation that SPDCE and SPDCW will continue to work after that date to ensure delivery against plans by 31 March 2029.

2.5. That SPDCE has also commissioned work on Rural and Island healthcare, and terms of reference for orthopaedics, emergency healthcare, digital front door, and Rural and Islands work have been agreed.

3. Background

3.1. Health Boards naturally collaborate on the planning and delivery of a range of services across the country. The publication of Scottish Government strategies such as the Public Sector Reform Strategy, the Service Renewal Framework, and the Operational Improvement Plan, all during 2025, have sharpened ministerial focus on how population-level planning can be mainstreamed within NHS Scotland.

3.2. DL (2025)25 mandated a focus on this population-level planning on five specific elements:

- Orthopaedic waiting times.
- Emergency Healthcare services.
- Digital Front Door/MyCare.
- Alignment of Business Systems.
- Consolidated Financial Planning.

3.3. To support this work, the DL also established two Subnational Planning and Delivery Committees – East and West (SPDCE and SPDCW, respectively). SPDCE comprises the Health Boards for:

- Borders.
- Fife.
- Grampian.
- Lothian.
- Orkney.
- Shetland.
- Tayside.

3.4. The Chairs and Chief Executives of each of these Boards are members of SPDCE, as are their counterparts from national and special Boards. It is intended to appoint Lead Directors, starting with Strategic Planning, Finance and Chief Operating Officers, to support this work.

3.5. John Connaghan, Chair of NHS Lothian, chairs SPDCE, and Caroline Hiscox, CEO of NHS Lothian, is the lead officer for this work.

3.6. As noted, the Ministerial Direction is to bring forward plans by 31 March 2026 against the five key priorities above, but the DL is also clear that there is an expectation that SPDCE and SPDCW will continue to work after that date to ensure delivery against these plans by 31 March 2029.

3.7. The DL is clear that there is no change to the clinical, workforce, and financial governance accountabilities of any Health Board.

4. Progress Update

4.1. At time of writing, SPDCE has met twice, with workstreams established on the five key priorities described above. Leadership for these groups is shown at Appendix 1, and Board members will note the geographic spread of leaders from across constituent Boards.

4.2. Activities undertaken include:

- Medical Director, Nurse Director, Director of Public Health, Director of Finance, Chief Operating Officer, and Director of Planning input to each work.
- Input from Centre for Sustainable Delivery (CfSD), Public Health Scotland (PHS), Scottish Ambulance Service, and NHS24.
- Three Acute Chief Officers assigned to each of Emergency Healthcare and Orthopaedics and an Executive Nurse Director to each.
- The establishment of weekly Chief Executive, Director of Strategic Planning and Director of Finance, calls for the East Coast to ensure effective coordination and deployment of skills and resources.
- The commencement of a joint strategic needs assessment process for the East, hand-in glove with a clear focus on data alignment for Emergency Healthcare and Orthopaedics.
- An outline overarching programme plan has been drafted.
- PHS have commenced work on how best to support a Fairer Scotland Duty assessment process.
- A weekly huddle has been established to bring together the East and West interim leadership teams.
- Interim lead officer capacity is being provided by Colin Briggs (interim Lead Director of Strategic Planning), Jim Crombie (interim Lead Chief Operating Officer), and Craig Marriott (interim Lead Director of Finance).
- The finance group has identified that the size of the financial challenge is in the order of £330m for 2026/27 and has commenced work on aligning approaches to this across the East Coast.
- Discussions have commenced on transitioning national planning priority arrangements from SGHSCD to SPDCE and SPDCW.

4.3. SPDCE has also commissioned work on Rural and Island healthcare.

4.4. SPDCE's meeting of 28 January 2026 agreed the commissions and terms of reference for orthopaedics, emergency healthcare, digital front door and Rural and Islands work.

4.5. Clearly communication across this wide geographical area and a very significant number of staff and stakeholders is crucial to the success of this project, and efforts such as this paper are a small but representative example of the awareness of its importance.

4.6. The Healthcare Improvement Scotland team are part of SPDCE and their expertise on public engagement will be sought.

5. Contribution to quality

Please indicate which of the Orkney Community Plan 2025 to 2030 values are supported in this report adding Yes or No to the relevant area(s):

Resilience: To support and promote our strong communities.	Yes.
Enterprise: To tackle crosscutting issues such as digital connectivity, transport, housing and fuel poverty.	Yes.
Equality: To encourage services to provide equal opportunities for everyone.	Yes
Fairness: To make sure socio-economic and social factors are balanced.	Yes.
Innovation: To overcome issues more effectively through partnership working.	Yes.
Leadership: To involve partners such as community councils, community groups, voluntary groups and individuals in the process.	Yes.
Sustainability: To make sure economic and environmental factors are balanced.	Yes.

6. Resource and financial implications

6.1. As noted above, the current estimated combined deficit is in the region of £330m. It is anticipated that greater collaboration and potentially sharing resources across the region more effectively will help all Boards, including Orkney, move closer to financial balance.

7. Risk, equality and climate change implications

7.1. At this point, the most obvious risk to this project is the very short timescale in which it must be delivered across a highly complex geographical and governance area. At the close of the SPDCE meeting of 28 January 2026 there were 43 working days to 31 March 2026. Detailed work has gone into clarifying with the Scottish Government their expectations of “what success looks like.”

7.2. Failure to comply with the Directions may result in escalation under the NHS Scotland Support and Intervention Framework.

7.3. There are no climate change implications directly arising as a result of this report.

8. Direction required

Please indicate if this report requires a direction to be passed to:

NHS Orkney.	No.
Orkney Islands Council.	No.

9. Escalation required

Please indicate if this report requires escalated to:

NHS Orkney.	No.
Orkney Islands Council.	No.

10. Authors and contact information

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11. Supporting documents

11.1. Appendix 1: Leadership of Workstreams.

East Scotland groups

Workstream	Chief Executive	Planner	CO	DoF	Medical Director	Nurse Director	DPH
Establishment and mechanisms	Caroline Hiscox	Colin Briggs	Jim Crombie	Craig Marriott	TBC	TBC	TBC
Orthopaedics	Nicky Connor	Ben Hannan	Jim Crombie	Susan Dunsmuir	Tracey Gillies	Simon Dunn	Joy Tomlinson
Unscheduled Care	Laura Scaife-Knight	Colin Briggs	Jim Crombie	Stuart Lyall	Lynn McCallum	Gillian McAulay	Shantini Paranjothy
Digital Front Door	Brian Chittick	June Smyth		Alex Stephen	Anna Lamont	June Brown	Susan Laidlaw
Rural and Islands	James Goodyear	Alan Cooper	tbc	tbc	Hugh Farrow-Bishop	Kathleen Carolan	Louise Wilson
Business systems	Peter Moore	CB discussing with PM			Chris McKenna	Samantha Thomas	Sohail Bhatti

Board	Chief Executive	Planner	CO	DoF	Medical Director	Nurse Director	DPH	HRD	Chair
Borders	Peter Moore	June Smyth	Oliver Bennett	Andrew Bone	Lynn McCallum	Sarah Horan	Sohail Bhatti	(vacant)	Karen Hamilton
Fife	Carol Potter	Ben Hannan	Claire Dobson	Susan Dunsmuir	Chris McKenna	Gillian Mcauley	Joy Tomlinson	David Miller	Pat Kilpatrick
Grampian	Laura Scaife-Knight	Lorraine Scott	Geraldine Fraser	Alex Stephen	Hugh Bishop	June Brown	Shantini Paranjothy	Philip Shipman	Alison Evison
Lothian	Caroline Hiscox	Colin Briggs	Jim Crombie	Craig Marriott	Tracey Gillies	Alison Macdonald	Susan Webb	Tom Power	John Connaghan
Orkney	James Goodyear	Tammy Sharp	Sam Thomas	Melanie Barnes	Anna Lamont	Sam Thomas	Louise Wilson	Dave Harris	David Campbell
Shetland	Brian Chittick	Lucy Flaws	Kathleen Carolan	Colin Marsland	Kirsty Brightwell	Kathleen Carolan	Susan Laidlaw	Lorraine Hall	Gary Robinson
Tayside	Nicky Connor	Sandra MacLeod	Lynn Smith	Stuart Lyall	James Cotton	Simon Dunn	(vacant?)	Elaine Watson	Carole Wilkinson