



ANNUAL REPORT

A summary of key developments,
activity and performance

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2025
2026

Welcome from Chair and Chief Executive

This has been an exciting year as we launched our vision for the next decade in our new Population Health and Care Strategy. This sets out our ambitious plans to transform the way healthcare is delivered across Forth Valley to help people live longer, healthier lives. We aim to achieve this by focussing on the issues you told us mattered most to you - preventing people from becoming unwell rather than just treating illness, working with partners to tackle some of the wider issues that affect health and delivering more services in local communities rather than hospitals.

Throughout the year we continued our journey to further strengthen local leadership, culture and governance. This was supported by the ongoing work of our Culture Change and Compassionate Leadership Programme, investment in senior clinical roles to enhance professional leadership and work to ensure we manage our resources effectively to deliver best care and outcomes for our patients.

Alongside this work, local staff took forward a wide range of developments across community and hospital-based services. These included the creation of a new Frailty Unit, the expansion of our much-praised Hospital at Home service and additional support for people living with cancer.

We also launched a new Anti-Racism Plan which sets out the Board's clear commitment to tackle racism and all forms of discrimination. The plan, which was developed in partnership with our Ethnic Diversity Staff Network, aims to address health inequalities in our diverse communities, by providing care and services that are inclusive and person centred as well as ensuring staff feel valued, respected and safe.

The achievements of local staff were also recognised during the year with a number of prestigious awards which are highlighted in this report.

We are committed to working with you to deliver the goals set out in our new Strategy and the wider programme of reform across NHS Scotland to help build a healthier, more equitable future.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Neena Mahal
Chair

Ross McGuffie
Chief Executive



Board Members

NHS Forth Valley is managed by a Board of Executive and non-Executive Directors who are accountable to the Scottish Government through the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care. The overall purpose of the Board is to provide strategic leadership, direction and governance, focussing on key plans and priorities which:

- Improve and protect the health of local people
- Improve local health services and the experience of those who use them
- Improve health outcomes, working with a wide range of partner organisations

The Board holds meetings every two months at our Board Headquarters in Stirling. Members of the public are welcome to attend and observe the meetings, in person or online. Details of the Board members for 2025/26 are listed below.

Non-Executive Members

Neena Mahal (Chair)

Allan Rennie (Vice Chair)

Martin Fairbairn

Gordon Johnston

Stephen McAllister

John Stuart

Prof Clare McKenzie (from 21 July 2025)

Alison Jaap (from 21 July 2025)

Finlay Scott (from 21 July 2025)

Local Authority Representatives

Falkirk Council - Cllr Fiona Collie

Clackmannanshire Council - Cllr Fiona Law

Stirling Council - Cllr Scott Farmer

Advisory Forum Chairs / Employee Director

Kirstin Cassells, Lead Pharmacist - Community Pharmacy, Public Health and Integrated Services

Karren Morrison, Employee Director

Executive Members

Ross McGuffie, Chief Executive

Prof Karen Goudie, Executive Nurse Director

Dr Jennifer Champion, Director of Public Health

Andrew Murray, Medical Director

Scott Urquhart, Director of Finance

At a Glance

6,524

Staff
(whole time equivalent)



£1 billion

Annual
Budget



306,000

Population
Served



(approx)

2,739

Babies
Born



66,805

Emergency Department
Attendances

21,888

Minor Injuries Unit
Attendances

806,077

Outpatient
Appointments
(new and return)



20,516

Operations
Carried Out



1,849

Cataract
Operations
Performed

At a Glance

42,139

Primary
Immunisations
Delivered by 12
months of age



314,606

Samples Collected
by our Microbiology
Laboratory



202,229

Radiology
Scans
Carried Out



100,894

Adult Covid-19 and
Flu Vaccinations
Delivered



930,915

Inpatient Pharmacy
Prescriptions
Issued



68,315

Contacts with
our Health
Visiting Teams



15,793

Contacts with
our School
Nursing Teams



33,087

Contacts with our
AHP Community
Inpatient Services



Service Developments

New Frailty Unit

A new 23-bed Frailty Unit opened within the Acute Assessment Unit at Forth Valley Royal Hospital at the end of May 2025 to provide specialist care for frail older people. Through early identification and screening, staff can develop tailored treatment plans, helping to slow or even reverse the progression of frailty and achieve better long-term outcomes.

Early results are very positive with people being supported to achieve individual goals and remain as active and independent as possible.



Expanding Pharmacy First Plus Service



The Pharmacy First Plus service, which enables local people to access expert advice and treatment, including certain prescribed medicines, was expanded.

Available in 39 pharmacies across the Forth Valley area, the service supports the management of a wide range of common health conditions, helping to reduce pressure on GP practices and improve access to care closer to home.

Investing in Hospital at Home Service

The Scottish Government announced plans for additional investment to expand Hospital at Home services across Scotland, including an additional £4.4m for NHS Forth Valley.

Hospital at Home provides short-term hospital-level care direct to people in their own homes to prevent hospital admissions or support early discharge. The announcement was made during a visit by First Minister John Swinney to NHS Forth Valley's Hospital at Home service's staff base at Falkirk Community Hospital.



The additional funding will be used to expand the existing Hospital at Home service as well as develop local heart failure, respiratory and Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy (OPAT) services to help more people remain at home and still access the specialist care they require.

Service Developments

Delivering More Care in Local Communities

The majority of healthcare is delivered in local communities by GP Practice and dental teams, pharmacists and opticians. This has been supported with investment to expand multidisciplinary teams and deliver more drug therapies and other treatments in the community.

Efforts to prevent people from becoming unwell have advanced with increased uptake of health checks and initiatives designed to prevent heart attacks and stroke. Dental services across the area have stabilised, with improved recruitment and new eye care services are improving access closer to home.



Reducing Waiting Times

Additional operations and outpatient clinics were carried out to reduce waiting times for local patients as well as support patients from other NHS Boards. This included providing access to local one-stop breast clinics and carrying out assessment and treatment for patients with skin cancer.

While work continues to address the remaining outstanding issues linked to the construction of the new National Treatment Centre ward, a temporary NTC service was established within an existing ward in Forth Valley Royal Hospital to provide orthopaedic treatment to patients from across Scotland. Once a solution has been agreed by all relevant parties, a detailed workplan will be developed to take forward any required changes along with a timetable for the completion of this work.



Introducing Robotic Assisted Surgery

Following the approval of a business case to introduce robotic assisted surgery in NHS Forth Valley, a new robotic system was installed in Forth Valley Royal Hospital at the end of March 2026.

The state-of-the-art technology enables surgeons to operate with enhanced precision, control and a highly magnified three-dimensional view, supporting improved outcomes for patients, including those undergoing treatment for cancer.



Evidence shows this approach can lead to reduced blood loss, fewer complications and improved preservation of healthy tissue. For patients, this may result in less post-operative pain, shorter hospital stays and a quicker return to normal daily activities.

Improving Cancer Care and Support

Dedicated Advice and Support

An innovative Single Point of Contact (SPOC) service, first trialled locally, has now been expanded across Scotland to provide dedicated support for people with cancer. The service offers patients a consistent point of contact for advice on appointments, tests and treatment, helping to reduce anxiety and improve access to care.



New Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Service

A new Rapid Cancer Diagnostic Service was launched in May 2025 to support earlier diagnosis for patients with non-specific symptoms. The service provides faster access to assessment and testing, helping to rule out cancer quickly or ensure timely treatment, where needed.



Improving the Cancer Journey

A new integrated health and social care service offering emotional, practical and financial support to people living with cancer and their families was launched across Forth Valley as part of a national programme.

Funded by Macmillan Cancer Support and the Scottish Government, the Improving the Cancer Journey approach aims to create a single, coordinated pathway to help people live as well as possible with and beyond cancer.



Speeding up Lung Cancer Diagnosis

A new Rapid On Site Evaluation (ROSE) service has been introduced to improve the speed and accuracy of lung cancer diagnosis at Forth Valley Royal Hospital. Delivered through a collaboration between local respiratory and pathology teams, the service enables real-time assessment of samples during diagnostic procedures, ensuring high-quality results and reducing the need for repeat tests.



Research and Innovation

NHS Forth Valley staff continued to support a wide range of research projects and clinical trials across a range of areas. These include lung cancer, cardiology and dementia. Further information on research, including current clinical trials, can be found on the [NHS Forth Valley website](#).

European first for lung cancer trial



NHS Forth Valley's Research and Development Unit became the first in Europe to open a new clinical trial for advanced and recurrent lung cancer. The study is testing a novel immunotherapy treatment, offering new hope for patients with limited options.

Led by Dr Nicola Steele and a multidisciplinary team, the trial marks a significant step forward in delivering innovative, research-led care.

Innovative treatment for psoriatic arthritis



A new clinical trial to provide patients with access to an innovative treatment for psoriatic arthritis was launched during the year. Led by the Rheumatology team, the study is evaluating a new drug designed to reduce joint pain and improve disease control.

The trial highlights the Health Board's ongoing commitment to expanding access to research and developing new treatments to improve patient outcomes.

New Collaboration with World's Top Nursing School



The University of Stirling and NHS Forth Valley began a new collaboration with the University of Pennsylvania's School of Nursing began in October 2025.

Penn Nursing is one of the leading schools for nursing and innovation in the world and it is hoped that this new partnership will help drive forward further innovative work to improve patient care, address healthcare challenges and enhance the profession of nursing.

Research and Innovation

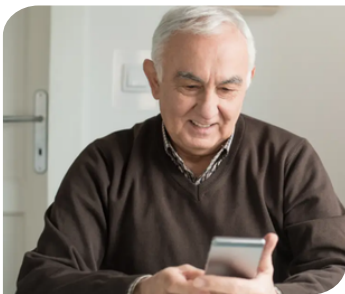
Speeding Up Assessment for Breast Lumps



Research led by the University of Stirling has found that a breast lump assessment pathway piloted by NHS Forth Valley can ease pressure on GP practices and prevent delays in diagnosis.

It enables people who find a lump in their breast to be referred direct to a specialist breast clinic at Forth Valley Royal Hospital without the need for an initial GP appointment. NHS Forth Valley has now implemented the streamlined pathway across all GP practices in the health board area.

Joining Forces to Improve Dementia Care



NHS Forth Valley joined the £2 million CONSOLIDATE network, a three-year project focused on improving quality of life and supporting independent living for people with dementia.

Bringing together NHS Boards, universities and partners, the initiative explores how technology can support social, mental and physical wellbeing as well as develop accessible, innovative solutions for dementia care.

Addressing Healthcare Challenges

Research from the University of Greenwich highlights how simulation is being used to explore difficult issues and address complex healthcare challenges.

The article *From Escalation to Emergence: NHS Forth Valley and the Quiet Power of Transformative Simulation*, which was published in the BMJ Leader, describes how NHS Forth Valley uses simulation not only as a clinical training technique, but also as a leadership and learning tool.



Advancing Cardiology Care



A new National Specialty Cardiology Advanced Practice Framework was launched following a collaboration between NHS Education for Scotland and NHS Boards across the country.

Delivery of this innovative framework was led by Leeanne Macklin, Senior Cardiology Advanced Clinical Nurse Specialist in NHS Forth Valley.

With cardiovascular disease continuing to be one of the leading causes of illness and death in Scotland, the new framework aims to equip nurses with the knowledge, skills and expertise necessary to care for patients with complex cardiovascular conditions.

Plans and Priorities

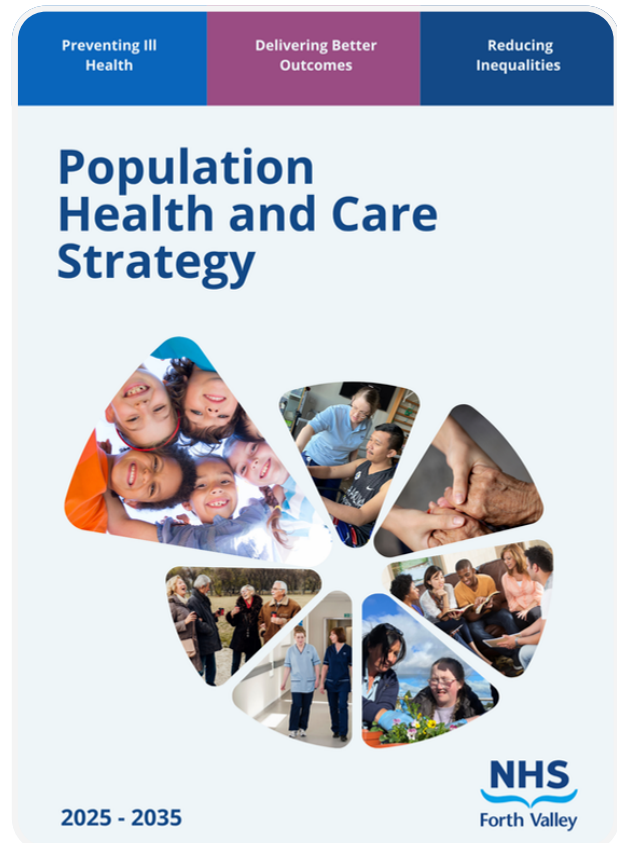
Setting out our Vision for the Future

Following extensive engagement with local patients, staff and partners, NHS Forth Valley unveiled a new 10-year Population Health and Care Strategy in October 2025.

This sets out the Board's long-term vision, aims and ambitions to help everyone lead longer, healthier lives. At its core, the Strategy aims to shift the focus from treating illness to preventing it – placing greater emphasis on early support, local services and working with partners to tackle some of the wider issues that influence health.

Key Priorities

- Prevent people from becoming unwell
- Work with others to reduce health inequalities
- Provide more care, services and support closer to home
- Achieve the best value and outcomes from the funding available
- Support and grow our workforce



You can find out more about the Strategy on the NHS Forth Valley [website](#)

Making the Best Use of our Resources

The delivery of the new Healthcare Strategy will be underpinned by a Value Based Health and Care approach to service planning and delivery.

This approach ensures we make the best use of the resources available to improve the health of all local people. It involves focussing on the services and activities that are the most beneficial and deliver the best outcomes while reducing or stopping those which do not add value.



A new Value Based Health and Care Collaborative was launched in January 2026 to help take forward this approach across a number of local service areas. Teams within these areas are being supported to test new ideas and focus on the outcomes that matter most to local patients, families and staff.

Key Plans and Priorities

Tackling Racism

A new Anti-Racism Plan sets out the Board's clear commitment to identify and challenge racism, and promote equality, dignity and respect for all patients, staff and visitors.

Developed in partnership with the Ethnic Diversity Staff Network, the three-year plan outlines practical actions to create a safe, inclusive and supportive environment across health services.

It focuses on improving access and outcomes, supporting staff wellbeing, strengthening community partnerships and using data to drive change. It also introduces enhanced training, reporting processes and visible leadership to support a zero-tolerance approach to racism and all forms of discrimination.



Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing



A new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan was approved by the Board in September 2025. This sets out a ten-year vision to improve mental health and wellbeing across the region and reflects extensive local feedback as well as national priorities.

The Plan looks at the needs of individuals at different stages of their lives - from childhood to adult and older age. It prioritises prevention, timely access and support for complex needs, underpinned by close collaboration across NHS, local councils, community organisations and people with experience of mental health issues.

Increasing Accessibility

A new Equality and Inclusion Strategic Framework (2025 – 2029) was developed with input from staff, community groups and other key stakeholders across Forth Valley. It focuses on improving outcomes in the following six key areas:-

- Improving accessibility
- Increasing awareness and understanding
- Providing more inclusive environments
- Enhancing support for neurodivergent individuals
- Challenging racism and promoting fairness
- Reducing health inequalities by addressing poverty and other barriers to good health



Celebrating Success

Newborn Hearing Screening Programme

NHS Forth Valley's Newborn Hearing Screening Programme celebrated 20 years of supporting early detection and treatment for babies with hearing loss in 2025. Delivered as a seven-day service, the programme identifies hearing issues within weeks of birth, enabling timely treatment and improved outcomes for children and families.

Since its launch in 2005, around 58,000 babies have been screened across Forth Valley, with approximately 3,000 newborn babies tested each year.



The service supports early diagnosis and provides ongoing multidisciplinary care, including audiology, speech and language therapy and specialist education support.

Early identification has been key to improving speech, language and social development, helping children to thrive at home and in education. Families have highlighted the lasting impact of early diagnosis and ongoing support, helping children grow in confidence and achieve positive outcomes at school and beyond.

Greener Healthcare

A range of more sustainable healthcare initiatives have been introduced across Forth Valley to reduce carbon emissions, cut waste and improve efficiency, as part of a national programme led by Green Healthcare Scotland.

The orthopaedic team at Forth Valley Royal Hospital has implemented a Lean Surgical Trays approach, reducing unnecessary instruments and streamlining processes without compromising patient safety. This has already halved the number of trays used in some procedures, delivered substantial savings and reduced around 1.3 tonnes of CO₂.



Further improvements have included work by the Endoscopy team to reduce single-use plastics, improve waste management and lower energy use.

These developments support more efficient use of resources while maintaining high standards of care, helping to reduce environmental impact and contribute to national climate targets. The approach also demonstrates how sustainability can be embedded into everyday clinical practice, delivering both environmental and financial benefits.

Celebrating Success

Supporting Healthcare Careers

An innovative new healthcare careers programme, delivered in partnership with Falkirk Council and Positive Qualities, was introduced to help young people gain skills, confidence and practical experience.

The 18-week programme combines classroom learning with placements across a range of hospital services, helping participants prepare for roles in healthcare or undertake further training.



Helping Women THRIVE



A THRIVE to Keep Well programme aims to help local women build confidence, improve wellbeing and develop new skills linked to employment, learning and volunteering.

The 16-week programme combined practical workshops and peer support to help participants make positive lifestyle changes and achieve personal goals.

Transforming Children's Communication

A partnership between Speech and Language Therapy services and Alva Primary School has helped create a more inclusive, communication-friendly learning environment.

The approach brings together multidisciplinary expertise and provides staff with the tools and training to support children's communication and wellbeing.

The initiative has improved pupil confidence, reduced anxiety and supported better learning outcomes across the whole school.



Celebrating Success

Neonatal Unit Goes Gold

The Neonatal Unit at Forth Valley Royal Hospital achieved gold accreditation from national baby charity Bliss in recognition of the high standards of care staff provide for premature and sick babies and their families.

The award, which was presented at a special ceremony on 9 October 2025, reflects a strong commitment to supporting parents to be actively involved in their baby's care.



Outstanding Oncology Care



The Oncology team at Forth Valley Royal Hospital received a national award on 28 October 2025 from Myeloma UK in recognition of their outstanding care and support for patients with incurable blood cancer.

The award highlights the team's commitment to personalised, compassionate care and improving quality of life for patients and their families.

Nursing Graduate Success

More than 100 newly qualified nursing graduates from the University of Stirling secured jobs with NHS Forth Valley to help grow the local workforce and support patient care.

Staff across the health board work hard to support student nurses throughout their education and practice placements which is why so many choose to stay in NHS Forth Valley after they graduate.

Work continues with local schools, colleges and universities to help build a skilled and sustainable workforce.



Celebrating Success

National Recognition

Staff and teams from across Forth Valley received four national awards at Scotland's Health Awards in November 2025, recognising excellence in patient care and innovation.

The Children's Speech and Language Therapy team won both the Innovation Award and Tackling Health Inequalities Award, while Charmaine Black, a community learning disability nurse, received the Nurse Award. The prison healthcare team at HMP & YOI Stirling also received the Unsung Heroes Award.

These achievements highlight the dedication, compassion and impact of local staff involved in delivering high-quality care and improving outcome across a diverse range of health services.



Inspiring Future Nurses



More than 50 local staff were recognised by student nurses from the University of Stirling for the outstanding support they provided during their clinical placements. The Inspirational Practice Supervisor/Assessor event highlighted the vital role experienced staff play in mentoring and developing the next generation of nurses. It also demonstrates the importance of partnership working and an ongoing commitment to high-quality education, training and patient care.

Performance

83.6%

of patients were waiting less than six weeks for one or more of the eight key diagnostic tests

April 2026

(Target 100% - Scotland 71.7%)

7.39%

Workforce
To reduce sickness absence to 4%

April 2026

(Scotland 6.05%)

93.3%

of patients referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) started treatment within 18 weeks of referral

April 2026

(Target 90% - Scotland 90.9%)

76.4%

of patients waited less than 62 days from urgent suspicion of cancer referral to first cancer treatment

March 2026

(Target 95% - Scotland 74%)

99.1%

of patients waited less than 31 days for their first cancer treatment from the day where a decision to treat was made

March 2026

(Target 95% - Scotland 94.6%)

31.1%

of patients started their day case or inpatient treatment within 12 weeks of the agreement to treat

March 2026

(Target 100% - Scotland 54.5%)

62.1%

of patients waited less than 12 weeks from referral to a first outpatient appointment

April 2026

(Target - 95% - Scotland 50.5%)

75.8%

of patients started treatment within 18 weeks of being referred for psychological therapy

Feb 2026

(Target - 90% - Scotland 81.1%)

4.6%

did not attend a new outpatient appointment at Forth Valley Royal Hospital

April 2026



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