

# Core brief

## Daily update

(18 February 2025, 4.15pm)

Topics in this Core Brief:

- Letter from the Cabinet Secretary Health and Social Care to All NHS Staff

## **REDUCTION OF THE WORKING WEEK FOR AGENDA FOR CHANGE STAFF TO 36 HOURS: LETTER FROM THE CABINET SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TO ALL STAFF**

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to tell you how we are going to take the next step to reduce your working week – in a way that you told us will work best for you and the patients of NHS Scotland.

### Reduced Working Week for Agenda for Change Staff

I want to tell you directly that I am committed to implementing the 36 hour week for Agenda for Change staff, alongside taking bold and ambitious steps to reform and renew our health service and deliver the change that people in Scotland need now.

You will be aware that when we announced plans to reduce the working week for healthcare staff, the working group recommended we implement it over three stages.

The workforce is core to NHS Scotland and based on what you have told us about the first stage, we now intend to roll-out one final stage – a single reduction of one hour in 2026.

Feedback and assessment of the first 30 minute reduction, which included hearing the views of staff, staff side and NHS leaders, told us that there is a strong desire to implement the remaining reduction as a one-off exercise, minimising the number of system and rota changes required, and allowing sufficient lead-in time to support staff and services to plan effectively.

For those reasons, I have agreed that the final reduction will be implemented as a single 60-minute block of time on 1 April 2026, with NHS Boards working in partnership to put delivery plans in place by October 2025.

It is crucial that we deliver any further change in a way that is safe for patients and staff, and which supports the continued recovery of services, avoiding any extra burden for our workforce.

I recognise the tremendous pressures you have been working under and changes you are facing – something our vision and actions aim to address, bringing about positive change. NHS renewal and recovery will be delivered by you, but it must also work for you.

Staff wellbeing is central to this and implementing the final stage of the reduced working week is an important part of our overall approach to wellbeing.

We have also just published the Ministerial Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce (NMT) and its Listening Project reports which were produced through strong collaboration with staff side colleagues and wider stakeholders. A number of the NMT recommended actions will have relevance to all staff and is a great example of how we can work together to renew and modernise service delivery.

### Renewal and Modernisation

Alongside the changes to your working week that I am committed to delivering, I also recognise that we need to improve health and social care performance to make it easier for you to do your jobs well.

That is why the First Minister and I have set a clear trajectory for health and social care delivery over the coming year, backed by the record investment of £21.7 billion from the budget.

Health and social care staff are critical to effective services, we could not have these services without your incredible efforts. It is important that, as we take forward improvements, this also improves the experience for staff. I want to work with you to deliver the services for the people of Scotland that I know you want to see too.

Our vision aims to alleviate current pressures while driving long-term, systemic improvements to ensure a sustainable health service. This is with the aim of reducing immediate pressures across the NHS, improving access to treatment, shifting the balance of care from acute services to the community, and improving access to health and social care services. Digital and technological innovation as

well as prevention will support new ways of working and supporting people across Scotland.

I look forward to continuing to work together to ensure we can continue to deliver the best care for the patients of NHS Scotland. Thank you for your service and for the work we will be delivering together over the coming year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Gray', written in a cursive style.

**NEIL GRAY**

**It is important to share Core Brief with colleagues who do not  
have access to a computer.  
A full archive of printable PDFs are available on [website](#)**