Healthcare Improvement Scotland

Focus on Frailty programme update November 2026

Focus on Frailty programme 2026/27

We support 12 NHS boards and HSCP teams to improve access to and experience of person-led, coordinated health and social care for older people living with frailty, in line with the NHS Scotland Operational Improvement Plan and Ageing and frailty standards (2024).

This programme focuses on:

- Proactive community services to support people to live well in the community and avoid hospital admission.
- Acute hospital frailty services.
- Integration and pathways between community and hospital.

What we do

- Provide one-to-one quality improvement coaching.
- Provide places at in person learning sessions.
- Site visits from the Healthcare Improvement Scotland team.
- Provide access to clinical expertise on frailty.
- Advise on data and measurement, strategic planning and engaging people and families in improvement.
- Share a change package and measurement framework.
- Publish tools and resources based on the best available evidence.
- Deliver a learning system that enables people working in frailty services to share and learn.

Impact of the programme 2026/27

10 teams have progressed to testing changes.

1 team has reported modest improvement following a test of change.

1 team is understanding their system.

Examples of impact by teams

69 admissions avoided from the emergency department at Raigmore Hospital, NHS Highland, between August and September 2026 through an Allied Health Professional front door frailty service.

17 admissions avoided in NHS Western Isles through initiation of comprehensive geriatric assessment at the front door between June and September.

Frailty Directed Enhanced Service

On 23 and 29 September 2026, the Scottish Government, the Royal College of General Practitioners Scotland and Healthcare Improvement Scotland hosted an online webinar on the Frailty Directed Enhanced Service (DES) and continuity of care.

The webinar provided an overview of the requirements of the Frailty DES and explored the importance of continuity of care in supporting people living with frailty.

There were **626** attendees across both webinars. **70%** of respondents completed an evaluation to say they felt more confident in participating in the enhanced service.

"Relational continuity saves lives and improves clinician satisfaction."

Access a recording of this session here.

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12 teams are participating in the programme

- NHS Ayrshire & Arran
- East Ayrshire HSCP
- NHS Forth Valley, Falkirk HSCP, Clackmannanshire and Stirling HSCP
- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, South Sector Older People's Services
- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde long term conditions team
- NHS Highland
- NHS Lanarkshire
- NHS Lothian, Royal Infirmary Edinburgh
- Orkney HSCP and Age Scotland Orkney
- Renfrewshire HSCP and Royal Alexandra Hospital
- NHS Shetland and Shetland HSCP
- NHS Western Isles and Western Isles HSCP

Learning session 2

On 6 October we held the second learning session for teams participating in the 2026/27 programme.

NHS Forth Valley, NHS Highland, East Ayrshire HSCP and NHS Western Isles shared insights from their tests of change.

Attendees also heard from Dr Tom Downes, National Clinical Lead for Older People, NHS England. Tom shared the national context in relation to the quality of care for older people living with frailty in England, alongside examples of improvement from services.

92% of respondents found the session extremely or very useful.

Recently completed milestones

Between July 2026 and October 2026 we:

- Facilitated three project surgeries.
- Published three change packages on the Healthcare Improvement Scotland website.
- Presented one poster at the NHS Scotland event.
- Hosted two webinars on the frailty directed enhanced service for general practice with over 600 attendees.
- Held a virtual learning session.
- Held an informal drop in session for teams to share their 'highlights and headaches'.

Next steps

In the next quarter we will:

- Review the data and progress reports submitted by teams.
- Facilitate a project surgery on 25 November on spreading and sustaining improvement.
- Deliver a local learning session for teams in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.
- Visit Orkney HSCP, NHS Shetland and the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, NHS Lothian.

Spotlight on the August project surgeries

We facilitated three project surgeries across the month of August. One on each of the three areas of focus within the programme. Teams shared their successes, challenges and learning.

There were **203** attendees and representation from all 12 teams across the project surgeries. **79%** of attendees said that they found the project surgeries either very or extremely useful.

"Really helpful to hear stories of how projects progress and the challenges. Lots of learning!"