
**How £90 million could
be spent to improve
health and care
services for the people
of Scotland**

Background

According to Audit Scotland, NHS boards had to make an unprecedented £390 million in savings simply to break even in the last financial year.[1] Already in the current financial year, some of Scotland's largest health boards have expressed concern over whether they will manage to balance the books.

Audit Scotland's report into NHS performance and finances in 2016-17 says the service faces significant challenges, which include:

- more people waiting longer to be seen
- failure to meet the majority of national targets
- Scotland's health is not improving and significant inequalities remain
- General practice under pressure with problems recruiting and retaining GPs.

In the UK, rising demand from an ageing population, paying for expensive medicines and technologies, along with a prolonged period of financial austerity, are combining to create a perfect storm where the patient can be the loser. Scotland is no different. An additional £90 million, while not a panacea, could make a huge difference to individual services, to patients and their families, and to the wider health and care system in Scotland.

Below are some examples of how the money could be spent. The sources are clearly referenced – many come from the Scottish Government's own announcements and documents. They are necessarily subjective and not exhaustive, but give a flavour of the potential of extra resource at this tough time.

Tackling waiting times

The issue

Patients in Scotland should not have to wait more than 12 weeks for treatment such as hip and knee replacements or other elective surgery. The right to treatment within this time is enshrined in law, but despite this, patients in many parts of the country are waiting much longer.[2]

Figures from ISD Scotland show that in September 2017, 102,592 patients had been waiting more than 12 weeks; 70,125 had been waiting more than 16 weeks (up from 40,127 at the same point in 2016).

Research by the Scottish Conservatives, published in January 2017, shows that patients are routinely waiting six months or more for hip replacements.[3]

As these figures (obtained via a Freedom of Information request) show the numbers waiting in November, before winter flu hit, leading to cancelled operations, it is likely that even more patients are now waiting longer for essential, life-changing surgery.

Figures from ISD also show that people are waiting longer than the 12-week target for an outpatient appointment.

The solution

The average cost of an inpatient case in 2016-17 was £2,838

The average cost of a day case patient episode in 2016-17 was £937

The average cost of an outpatient attendance in 2016-17 was £152

A total hip replacement should cost the NHS around £5,600, although this can vary between health boards and for patients with different needs.[4]

Investment of £1.12 million would enable the NHS to carry out an additional 200 hip replacements each year.

Investment of £2.84 million could buy an additional 1,000 inpatient stays.

Investment of £937,000 could pay for an additional 1,000 day case procedures

£1.52 million could pay for an additional 10,000 outpatient appointments

Specialist cancer nurses

Each year in Scotland more than 30,000 people are diagnosed with cancer.[5]

Macmillan clinical nurse specialists can make a huge difference to people with cancer, treating and managing their health concerns, and using their skills and expertise in cancer care to provide support (physical and emotional), co-ordinate care services, and to inform and advise patients on clinical and practical issues.

Macmillan funds new cancer nurse specialist posts for the first three years, then the funding is taken over by partner organisations including the NHS.

£53,217 funds a Macmillan nurse for a year[6]

£4 million would fund an additional 25 Macmillan nurses for three years, making a huge difference to hundreds of people with cancer and their families.

A similar amount would fund other experts in cancer care, including specialist physiotherapists, palliative care nurses, pharmacists and speech and language therapists.

Marie Curie provides expert nursing support to people who are nearing the end of life, in hospices or in their own home. One hour of nursing care from Marie Curie in someone's own home costs £20.

£90 million could provide 4.5 million hours of care for people in their own homes from Marie Curie.

Research

The Scottish Government funds research to improve the health of people in Scotland, and to improve services provided. This is done through a variety of avenues.

The Chief Scientist Office of the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates is responsible for managing £65 million to support and encourage research.[7]

The Scottish Government also makes specific awards for research. For example, in January, the first two recipients of the Gordon Aikman scholarships were announced. This programme, which aims to improve care for people with motor neurone disease, is funded by £25,000 from the Scottish Government, matched by MND Scotland.

£5 million would fund 200 similar scholarships, helping to revolutionise care and build research capacity and excellence in the Scottish NHS.

Winter pressures

The NHS in Scotland has been hit hard by rising demand this winter, with numbers of flu cases doubling and soaring attendance at emergency departments. Increased demand has also meant that planned operations have been cancelled. The Scottish Government invested an additional £22.4

million to address these additional pressures, but still operations have been cancelled and performance against the four-hour target for waits in A&E has fallen.

Doubling this additional investment would help the NHS cope better with winter pressures – and, indeed, with increasing pressure throughout the year.

NHS Staff

The staff pay bill is the biggest area of expenditure for the NHS in Scotland.

**An additional £90 million could pay the salaries of: approximately 4,000 newly qualified nurses[8]; or
2,500 experienced nurses at the top of the pay scale for band 6 posts (such as a senior staff nurse working in a specialist area); or
1,150 newly qualified consultant hospital doctors[9]; or
852 of the most experienced consultant hospital doctors**

Individual services making a difference

The Family Nurse Partnership is a scheme that supports young first-time mums with frequent one-to-one visits from early pregnancy to the child's second birthday. Ensuring all young mums under the age of 19 can benefit, wherever they are in Scotland, costs a total of £16 million.[10]

The Scottish Government has committed £200 million to expand the Golden Jubilee Hospital and create five elective care centres. A further £35 million would go some way to create an additional elective care centre, increasing capacity and reducing waiting times.[11]

Conclusion

The health and social care service in Scotland is under huge pressure, both financially and in terms of performance. While a small part of the overall health budget, £90 million would help ease some of these pressures and improve services for the people of Scotland.

NOTES:

[1] <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/nhs-in-scotland-2017>

[2] The Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011 established a legal 12-week treatment time guarantee for eligible patients due to have planned inpatient or day case treatment from 1 October 2011

[3] <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/six-month-delays-for-hip-replacements-now-routine-ndb36qwnx>

[4] Based on the [NHS England tariff](#) for 2016-17; similar figures were last published in Scotland in 2013.

[5] <https://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Cancer/Publications/2017-04-25/2017-04-25-Cancer-Incidence-Summary.pdf>

[6] [https://be.macmillan.org.uk/Downloads/FactSheets/The-Cost-of-Macmillans-Services-fact-sheet-\(2017\)-v1.pdf](https://be.macmillan.org.uk/Downloads/FactSheets/The-Cost-of-Macmillans-Services-fact-sheet-(2017)-v1.pdf) This amount is the full cost of employing a Macmillan nurse, including 'on-costs' such as national insurance and travel costs.

[7] <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Research/by-topic/health-community-care/chief-scientist-office>

[8] Newly qualified nurses at the bottom of band 5 earn £22,440. Experienced nurses at the top of band 6 earn £35,933. This does not include the total cost of employing nurses, such as employer's national insurance, pension contributions, and recruitment costs

<https://www.rcn.org.uk/employment-and-pay/nhs-pay-scales-2017-18>

[9] Newly qualified consultants (on the 2004 contract) earn £78,304 per annum. Consultants with more than 20 years experience earn £105,570. This does not include the total cost of employing doctors, such as employer's national insurance, pension contributions, and recruitment costs; nor does it include bonuses such as discretionary points.

[10] <https://news.gov.scot/news/support-for-first-time-mums>

[11] <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/12/8959/downloads>