APPROVED by APF on 18th May 2026

Area Partnership Forum (APF) Meeting – Action Note
Monday 16th March 2026, 2.00pm via Microsoft Teams

Present Gordon James (AA Executive)

Nicola Graham — AA I&SS
Kimberley Montgomerie — (AA Business Support Services)
Lorna Sim — RCN (External)
Deborah Logan — (AA Orthoptics)
Jacqui Dunlop — (AA Acute)
Craig Lean — (AA People, Safety & Culture)
Carrie Fivey — (AA People, Safety & Culture)
Wendy Smith — (AA Women & Children)
Ken Brown — (AA Podiatry)
Brian Steven — (NHS Ayrshire & Arran)
Selina Mungall (AA People, Safety & Culture)
Frances Ewan — (AA Partnership)
Ewing Hope — (AA Partnership)
Mark Hogarth — (AA People, Safety & Culture)
Lisa Davidson — (AA Public Health)
Sarah Leslie — (AA People, Safety & Culture)
Jacquie Downs — (AA People, Safety & Culture)
Tom Cairney — (AA Hospital at Night/Unison)
Lucie Fontana — (AA Occupational Therapy)
Roisin Kavanagh — (AA Pharmacy)
Jennifer Wilson — (AA Nurse Directorate)
Claire Riddall — (AA People, Safety & Culture)
David Stonehouse — (AA Finance)
Craig McArthur — (External)
Elizabeth Bruce (AA Physiotherapy)

Allina Das — (AA Pre-Op Crosshouse)
Kirstin Dickson — (AA Transformation & Sustainability)
Paula Dumigan — (AA People, Safety & Culture)
Louise Sinclair — (AA Podiatry)
Elaine Savory — (AA People, Safety & Culture)

Apologies: Vicki Campbell — (AA Acute) *(Declined)*
Miriam Porte — (AA Transformation & Sustainability) *(Declined)*
Christopher Pitt — (AA Biochemistry) *(Declined)*
Pauline Brady — (AA CAMHS) *(Declined)*
Terri Collins — (AA Biochemistry) *(Declined)*
Tracy Scott — (AA People, Safety & Culture) *(Declined)*
Sam Mullin — (Activist SCO) *(Declined)*

In attendance: Margaret Weir (AA Executive), Lesley-Anne Smith (AA Public Health)

Item	Title and Summary of Discussions	Action/Outcome	Owner
1.	**Welcome and Apologies**		
	The Chair, Gordon James, opened the meeting. Gordon noted that the meeting would be transcribed for note taking accuracy. Apologies were listed as above.	Approved to proceed; apologies noted.	
2.	**Previous Meeting Note: 26th January 2026**		
	The group agreed both sets of notes from 26 January 2026, and 28 January 2026 were an accurate reflection of the meeting. Action completion was verified following a tidy-up of legacy items from March–May 2025. All actions were confirmed as complete.	Approved	

3.	**Matters Arising**		
3.1	**Update on hearing availability**		
	Ewing Hope outlined concerns regarding changes under Once for Scotland policies. Previously, when formal cases were scheduled, HR liaised directly with the relevant staff side representatives to ensure availability in advance, which helped avoid cancellations. Under the new arrangements, the 14 day notice requirement places responsibility on individual staff, leading to concerns about short notice requests and clashes with commitments such as job evaluation activities, which remain a priority for staff-side representatives. To address this, discussions will be held with Sarah Leslie and Lorna Kenmuir, to agree a more practical method for coordinating availability to ensure meetings can proceed promptly and efficiently. A proposal outlining an improved approach whilst still aligned with the Once for Scotland policy but allowing for more practical coordination will be brought to the next APF.	Actions: A proposal will be presented at the next APR	Ewing Hope
3.2	**Travel Disruption and overtime**		
	Sarah Leslie confirmed that staff who were required to stay late due to Crosshouse roadwork delays impacting shift handovers and who remained on duty at the request of the service to maintain safe staffing levels should receive overtime where the delay exceeded one hour, unless mutually agreed TOIL is appropriate. A joint communication will be issued to staff.	Action: Communication to be sent to staff regarding overtime for travel disruption at UHC	Sarah Leslie
3.3	**Staff Values Culture Survey**		
	Carrie Fivey shared the results of the values and culture questionnaire, which had around 490 full responses. Key strengths included strong team relationships, passionate staff and positive line-manager behaviours. Staff recognised the organisational values and identified “kindness” as a value they would add. The survey also highlighted concerns such as inconsistent behaviours, reports of incivility, communication issues, workload pressures and variation in leadership and psychological safety. These findings are now shaping the organisation’s culture programmes and wider culture framework.	Approved	

4.	**Financial Update**		
4.1	**Level 4 Escalation Update**		
	Gordon James provided an update on the current financial position, noting that NHS Ayrshire & Arran had been at Level 3 of the Scottish Government's Support and Intervention Framework for several years due to ongoing financial challenges. He advised that, in recent weeks, the Board had been formally notified by the Chief Executive of NHS Scotland and Director-General that the organisation has now been escalated to Level 4, specifically in relation to its financial position.		
4.2	**Assurance Board Structure**		
	Gordon James updated the forum that an Assurance Board is being established and will meet with the organisation every two weeks, with papers, minutes and supporting documentation to be published on both the Board's and the Scottish Government's websites. The first meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 19 March 2026. Gordon confirmed that he will attend the national sessions and that work is underway to develop the required savings plans. He advised that regular updates will be provided to the APF and noted that a communication has already been issued to staff.		
4.3	**Year End Position**		
	Gordon James introduced David Stonehouse to the group as Interim Director of Finance David noted that the previous forecast showed a year-end deficit of just over £40 million, this has since improved to £29.7 million, largely due to non-recurrent support, including one-off Scottish Government funding, medical negligence scheme credits and savings from the new medicines fund. The national target is a £25 million deficit, and early month-11 figures suggest this may be achievable, though this relies on further one-off support. He highlighted that these improvements do not address the underlying deficit, but that Scottish Government remains supportive while the organisation continues to demonstrate progress.		

4.4	**2026/27 outward look**		
	David Stonehouse advised that the organisation faces an underlying recurrent deficit of just over £75 million next year. After considering additional cost pressures and available funding, the savings target for 2026/27 is £36 million, including £5 million required for the IJB balance. Approximately £25 million of potential savings have been identified so far, with just over £15 million assessed as low-risk. Work continues to redefine the remaining plans. David emphasised that cost reduction will not involve large-scale restructuring, the priority is to better manage the temporary pay bill which is currently just under £40 million, particularly given the additional impact of implementing the reduced working week. The overall focus remains on improving efficiency rather than undertaking major workforce changes. Gordon James thanked David and suggested arranging a separate budget session so colleagues can review the figures in a simple format. An APF workshop will be scheduled before the next meeting on 18 May 2026	Action: APF workshop to be arranged	Gordon James/ David Stonehouse
5.	**Race Equality Action Plan**		
	Elaine presented the anti-racism plan, developed in line with Scottish Government requirements and aligned to the 2025–2029 Equality Outcomes. The plan identifies three priority areas linked to reducing health inequalities for ethnic minority communities and has been reviewed through the Equality Implementation Group, Staff Governance, the Culture Steering Group. Staff networks have been engaged, and publication will follow board approval in April. Elaine confirmed that baseline data will now be established, with annual monitoring and targeted action where needed.	Approved	
6.	**People**		
6.1	**Culture Steering Group Update**		
	Claire Riddall provided an update on Civility Saves Lives, confirming work is underway to create a consistent, corporate approach. Pilot sessions are progressing, and engagement continues with staff networks, including the LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority groups, whose feedback is helping shape language and	Approved	

	accessibility. Further awareness sessions are planned, and the work will continue to evolve as more data is gathered to understand underlying cultural issues. Claire emphasised that while raising awareness of civility can improve behaviours, further work is required to understand underlying cultural issues and welcomed continued input and collaboration from APF members. Gordon James invited the group to consider how the APF should engage with the Civility Saves Lives programme, suggesting it may be helpful for the APF to take part in the phase-one workshops as a team. He proposed discussing this further with the co-chair, Carrie and Claire, with the option of arranging a short, dedicated session or mini-workshop at an appropriate time.	 Action: APF to take part in Civility Saves Lives programme phase-one workshops.	 Gordon James / Ewing Hope
6.2	**Give Respect Get Respect Update**		
	Carrie Fivey advised that while this programme is already in place within Ayrshire & Arran, a consistent board-wide approach is required. The programme sets out respectful and disrespectful behaviours, introduces a feedback model, and provides guidance on effective communication. Implementation work is ongoing, and the Culture Steering Group has begun reviewing the content. The proposal, informed by the values questionnaire, iMatter and wider feedback, seeks approval to further develop the programme and standardise its use across the organisation. Gordon James requested more detail on how the framework will operate in practice, including examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and clarity on how to raise concerns constructively. He emphasised the importance of clear communication so expectations are fully understood. Carrie confirmed she would work with Lorna Kenmuir to develop a more detailed and action-focused proposal, including practical examples, to bring back for further discussion.	Action: Develop an action-focused proposal to bring back to a future APF	Carrie Fivey
6.3	**MAST Update**		
	Carrie Fivey confirmed that the Once for Scotland MAST modules went live on 2 March 2026. Compliance has temporarily reduced from 80% to 67%, reflecting the addition of the two PDR and Health & Safety Ayrshire-specific modules on top of the nine national modules. These additions were made to improve PDR completion rates and address gaps identified in the national Health & Safety module.	Action: Health and Safety module to be reviewed.	Carrie Fivey

	Communications have been issued, and further clarification will be provided to ensure staff understand the total number of required modules. It was noted that the additional Health & Safety module should be reviewed so that staff complete only one module, rather than both a national mandatory module and an Ayrshire & Arran module. Carrie will provide an update at the next APF.		
7.	**Sub National and Regional Planning Update**		
	Gordon James provided an update on the Scottish Government's development of sub-national planning structures for the East and West regions. Staff-side representation has still to be agreed nationally, however it is expected that staff-side will have a role once arrangements are confirmed. For the West region, four initial workstreams have been set by the Scottish Government: whole-system flow, a sub-national orthopaedic plan, future financial planning, and digital developments including the rollout of the mycare.scot app. Gordon also highlighted the intention to develop consistent communications for all staff and APFs across the West region once national staff-side participation is confirmed.		
8.	**Terms and Conditions**		
8.1	**Implementation Reduced Working Week**		
	Craig Lean noted that the formal assurance to the Cabinet Secretary confirming implementation of the final hour of the reduced working week on 1 April 2026 would be submitted today. He reported that the part-time hours exercise had concluded, with 3,882 staff opting to retain their existing hours based on directorate risk assessments, equating to around 64 WTE. He advised that, because 1 April 2026 falls mid-week, national guidance confirms that the full roster week from 30 March 2026 should be treated under the new 36-hour arrangements. A communication will be issued to staff, and SSTS guidance will follow. Ongoing communications will continue through Daily Digest, including updated reference tables and the national annual leave calculator.	Action: Clarity for staff who are still to agreed RWW hours	Craig Lean/ Sarah Leslie/ Ewing Hope

	Ewing raised concerns about pockets of staff where hours had not yet been agreed, stressing the need for full assurance before 1 April 2026. It was agreed Craig and Sarah Leslie will urgently review these areas with staff-side.		
8.2	**Band 5 Nursing Review**		
	Jacquie Downs provided a brief update on job evaluation, noting that Band 5 nursing outcomes now sit at 63, with business-as-usual outcomes at 64. She highlighted ongoing work to batch larger groups of similar Band 5 post which could allow 50 or more outcomes to be released at once. Jacquie advised that although the original plan was to complete appeals at the end of the process, she now proposes addressing them as they come in, given that no clear end date exists. Ewing noted the need to ensure fairness for all staff and suggested further discussion on sequencing appeals. Gordon asked that this be reflected in the updated plan and requested regular progress updates, including information from the new national dashboard.	Action: Plan to include appeals process and information from national dashboard	Jacquie Downs
8.3	**Protected Learning Time**		
	Carrie Fivey noted that, in relation to the wider PLT programme, the Board is still awaiting further guidance from the Scottish Government on the metrics that will be used. However, it is expected that compliance with MAST and role-specific training will form the core measures. PDR will continue to be recorded separately, with staff still able to complete this as part of their development.		
8.4	**STAC Guidance**		
	Sarah Leslie highlighted the joint letter from the Staff Side Chair (STAC) and the Director of HR (NES), issued nationally in response to concerns about variation in how NHS Scotland terms and conditions particularly job evaluation are being applied across boards. She noted that the APF had already developed a local Job Evaluation Plan, and that staff-side and management colleagues are now reviewing the national guidance to ensure local processes align with UK Staff Council and NHS Scotland expectations. A joint staff-side and management plan will be brought back to the APF to provide assurance that NHS Ayrshire & Arran remains aligned with national job evaluation principles.		

8.5	**Update on Job Evaluation**		
	Ewing Hope noted that, where possible, job evaluation requests should be aligned to existing matched posts to enable timely progression, with postholders retaining the right to request a review within six months should their duties change. It was noted that there is a need to rebuild managerial capability in drafting job descriptions and preparing job evaluation submissions, recommending that training be delivered with staff side representatives to support consistency and good practice. He also emphasised that several procedural elements should be incorporated into an updated local policy to ensure clarity of expectations are clear.		
9.	**Attendance Management**		
	Craig Lean reminded members that the attendance report shared at the previous meeting had generated further comments, which were considered jointly with staff-side. An accompanying action plan has been developed to complement not replace the existing ASDOM work, focusing on several additional areas of good practice. He also noted that ASDOM remains challenging due to the single national coding system, and discussions will take place nationally to seek more detailed categorisation. Sarah Leslie confirmed that the Health and Safety Wellbeing Committee would review absence data, stress risk assessments, and required actions at its next meeting.		
10.	**Policy**		
10.1	**Once for Scotland Phase 3**		
	Selina Mungall advised that Phase 3 of the Once for Scotland Workforce Policies has now been published nationally, effective from week commencing 9 March 2026. This final phase includes ten policies focused on health, safety and wellbeing. The Policy Development Group is working with Health and Safety colleagues to support local implementation, including communications, logistics and resources. Policies and supporting guidance will be accessible via Athena and the Once for Scotland website with a stop press also being circulated to staff. Selina noted that a small number of national publications remain paused and will be updated when further information is available.		

10.2	**Compensatory Rest Guidance**		
	Mark Hogarth provided an update on the recently issued national circular on compensatory rest, noting that it sets out a standardised approach agreed nationally by STAC. He advised that while boards are not able to alter the national framework, there are a small number of areas requiring local input. Mark confirmed he will provide a proposal at the next APF for approval.	Action: Proposal to be presented at the next APF	Mark Hogarth
10.3	**Special Leave**		
	Sarah Leslie explained the Workforce Programme Board Steering Group, originally established to support workforce efficiency initiatives during 2025–26, will be re-established from 1 April 2026 with an updated remit. As part of this, the group will review current special leave provisions to ensure clearer guidance, improved consistency, and strengthened governance. Staff-side representation will form a core part of this work to ensure that any proposed revisions reflect partnership principles and support the fair and consistent application of special leave arrangements across NHS Ayrshire & Arran.		
10.4	**Redeployment**		
	Sarah Leslie noted the Steering Group will review current redeployment processes, including the use of fixed-term contracts, secondments and wider workforce deployment arrangements. The aim is to maximise workforce capacity, strengthen attendance management pathways, and improve organisational control over non-temporary pay costs. Staff-side participation will be essential to ensure alignment with Agenda for Change terms and conditions and to support consistent organisational practice. From 1 April 2026, the Steering Group will take forward this with continued engagement from the APF		
11.	**AOCB**		
11.1	**Vacancy Scrutiny Panel**		
	Kimberley Montgomerie requested confirmation of partnership representation on vacancy scrutiny panels, citing delays in posts progressing. Sarah Leslie confirmed that NHS Ayrshire & Arran operates a single Corporate Vacancy Control Panel with staff-side representation, while HSCPs run their own processes. Ewing Hope noted	Action: Sarah to review partnership involvement in the internal directorate level vacancy scrutiny panel	Sarah Leslie

	that partnership involvement is not always present in internal directorate-level scrutiny, and Sarah agreed to review this to ensure appropriate governance and consistency.		
11.2	**15th June Public Holiday**		
	Kimberley Montgomerie requested an update on the potential June public holiday announced by First Minister John Swinney. Ewing Hope confirmed that clarification has been sought from the Cabinet Secretary, and that a consistent, Scotland-wide position is expected, though no response has yet been received. Gordon James advised that NHS Ayrshire & Arran will await national guidance to ensure alignment with other Boards and will issue a communication once a formal decision is confirmed.		
11.3	**Employee Director**		
	Ewing Hope advised the APF of his intention to retire on 2 October 2026. He confirmed that an all–staff-side meeting will be convened to begin the election process for his successor, allowing time for an appropriate handover period. Gordon James formally acknowledged Ewing's significant contributions to NHS Ayrshire & Arran, as well as his wider national work, and noted that appropriate recognition will be given in due course.		
12.	**Date of Next APF Meeting**		
	Monday 18th May 2026 via MS Teams at 2.00pm.		