

Digital Scotland

Scottish Digital Government
Best Practices



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Scotland's Public Service Reform Strategy: Delivering for Scotland



On June 18, 2025, the Scottish Government unveiled its Public Service Reform Strategy, a comprehensive plan to modernize public services, aiming to address demographic, economic, and technological challenges while improving outcomes for Scotland's communities.

Launched by Public Finance Minister Ivan McKee, the strategy builds on the 2011 Christie Commission's principles—prevention, integration, empowerment, and efficiency—and outlines over 100 actions to ensure services are sustainable, inclusive, and person-centered by 2030s.

It emphasizes collaboration with local councils, public bodies, trade unions, and communities, with a target to save £2.5 billion over five years by reducing corporate spending and optimizing frontline delivery.

Vision and Outcomes

The strategy envisions public services that enhance Scotland's National Performance Framework, focusing on fairness, opportunity, and economic growth. It aims to deliver measurable improvements in health, education, and community well-being, tackling inequalities and fostering resilience amid rising demand and UK Government funding constraints.

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Key outcomes include better health through integrated care, improved educational attainment, and stronger local economies, with a commitment to align services with Scotland's net-zero ambitions.

The Case for Reform

Scotland faces increased service demand due to an aging population, workforce shortages, and economic pressures from UK fiscal policies. The strategy highlights the need for bold reform to maintain high-quality services, drawing lessons from past successes like the Scottish Child Payment and the unified Police Service, which saved over £200 million. It stresses prevention to reduce long-term costs and integration to streamline service delivery across sectors.

Approach

The reform approach rests on four pillars:

- **People:** Services will be co-designed with communities, empowering citizens and staff through enhanced participation and workforce development.
- **Prevention:** Investments in early intervention, such as £1 billion annually in early childcare, aim to reduce future demand and inequalities.
- **Integration:** Interoperable digital systems will improve coordination between health, education, and social care, with pilots like Whole Family Support expanding.
- **Efficiency:** Automation, estate rationalization, and a new Digital Strategy will optimize resources, targeting £1.5 billion in savings by reducing back-office costs.

The strategy outlines sector-specific plans, including the NHS Operational Improvement Plan to address health service pressures and the Tackling Child Poverty Plan, aiming to reduce child poverty to 10% by 2030.

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A Public Service Reform Board, comprising public, private, and third-sector leaders, will monitor progress, ensuring transparency and accountability. Digital innovations, such as AI-driven precision medicine and accessible NHS appointment systems, are central, alongside leadership development to foster cultural change.

Conclusion

Scotland's Public Service Reform Strategy is a bold blueprint to transform public services, prioritizing prevention, collaboration, and efficiency. By leveraging digital tools, empowering communities, and aligning with national outcomes, it seeks to deliver sustainable, equitable services despite economic challenges. With rigorous oversight and stakeholder engagement, the strategy aims to build a resilient Scotland, ready for the 21st century's demands.

Scottish Government Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework

Described [here](#), the Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework (SRF), published by the Scottish Government on June 17, sets out a strategic vision to transform Scotland's health and social care services over the next decade, from 2025 to 2035.

The framework aspires to create a Scotland where people live longer, healthier, and more fulfilling lives by ensuring services are sustainable, efficient, high-quality, and accessible.

It responds to growing financial pressures and rising demand driven by demographic changes, building on the Operational Improvement Plan and Population Health Framework to deliver immediate improvements and long-term systemic reform.

The SRF is underpinned by five core principles that guide its design and delivery. It prioritizes prevention over reactive treatment, focusing on proactive measures to improve population health. Services are oriented around the needs of populations rather than structural boundaries, emphasizing community-based care over hospital-centric models. The framework places people at the heart of care, tailoring services to individual needs rather than system constraints, and embraces modern digital solutions to replace outdated methods, enhancing efficiency and accessibility.

Scottish Government Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework

Transformation is structured around four key areas. First, service delivery will shift towards community settings, making day-case treatment the norm and reducing reliance on hospitals. Second, governance and accountability will be strengthened through updated NHS Board guidance, clearer performance oversight, and collaborative planning, including the establishment of NHS Delivery, a new body consolidating functions of NHS National Services Scotland and NHS Education for Scotland.

Third, workforce and financial planning will involve collaboration with public, third, and independent sectors to align resources with service needs. Finally, data and digital innovation will enhance access to health data for research, streamline information sharing, and incorporate patient-reported outcomes to improve care quality.

The framework adopts a three-horizon model for implementation, with detailed actions for the first five years, including specific plans for Year 1, and broader objectives for Years 5 to 10. Collaborative leadership is central, fostering partnerships with NHS Boards, Community Planning Partnerships, and other stakeholders to ensure equitable and transparent resource allocation.

The SRF addresses findings from Audit Scotland's report on NHS governance by enhancing accountability and integrating national, sub-national, and local population plans. Financially, the 2025–26 Scottish Government Budget allocates £21.7 billion to health and social care, a significant increase since 2006–07, but growing demand necessitates efficient resource use guided by allocative and population value principles to ensure equitable distribution.

Scottish Government Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework

Addressing health inequalities is a core focus, particularly the “inverse care law,” where those with the greatest need often face barriers to access. The SRF aims to reduce disparities, especially in socio-economically disadvantaged and rural or island communities, through targeted reforms.

Impact assessments, including the Equality Impact Assessment, Island Communities Impact Assessment, and Fairer Scotland Duty, highlight and address inequalities across protected groups and geographic challenges. Key initiatives include the creation of NHS Delivery to streamline support, training, and digital services under a “Once for Scotland” approach, a data strategy with Research Data Scotland to improve data access, and legislation to enhance information sharing.

Due to tight timelines, initial consultation was limited to key partners, with plans for broader public engagement during implementation. Detailed actions beyond Year 5 remain flexible, reflecting the SRF’s long-term adaptability. Overall, the framework provides a comprehensive roadmap for reforming Scotland’s health and social care system, emphasizing prevention, community care, digital innovation, and equitable access to achieve sustainable, person-centered services.