

SWAG Extraordinary
Thursday 18th November 2025

15:30 – 16:15

MS Teams

Attendees

Confirmation of members in attendance at the time of writing:

Name	Organisation
Fiona Hogg (Chair)	Scottish Government
Jane Hamilton	Scottish Government
Mary Morgan	NHS National Services Scotland
Jenny Alexander	NHS Tayside
Karen Goudie	NHS Forth Valley
Gordon Jamieson	NHS Western Isles
Alex Stephen	NHS Grampian
Christina Bichan	NHS Education for Scotland
Elaine Watson	NHS Tayside
Samantha Thomas	NHS Orkney
Pamela Jamieson	NHS Dumfries & Galloway
Robin McNaught	The State Hospital Board for Scotland
Fiona Higgins	The State Hospital Board for Scotland
Jacqui Jones	NHS Lanarkshire
Matt Tucker	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Emma Currer	Royal College of Midwives
Lorna Low	Royal College of Midwives
Norman Provan	Royal College of Nursing
Jasmin Clark	Royal College of Nursing
Barbara Sweeney	Royal College of Nursing
Donna McComb	Royal College of Nursing
Tobias Kunkel	Royal College of Nursing
Eleanor Harvey	Unison
Mary-Jane Mitchell	Unison
Gordon McKay	Unison
Lorna Robertson	Unite the Union
Heather Gilfillan	Unite the Union
Steven Lindsay	Unite the Union
Niall Hermiston	British Medical Association (BMA)
Claire Ronald	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Lyndsay Hunter	Royal College of Podiatry
Sam Mullin	GMB Scotland
Linda Carr-Pollock	GMB Scotland



Additional attendees:

Name	Organisation
Zachary Deponio	Scottish Government
Victoria Freeland	Scottish Government
Christina Stokes	Scottish Government
Kirsten Nash	Scottish Government

Apologies from:

Name	Organisation
Paul Bachoo	NHS Grampian
Bob Summers	NHS Highland
Yvonne Stewart	Society and College of Radiographers
Simon Fevre	British Dietetic Association
Karen Leonard	GMB
Matt McLaughlin	Unison
Kathryn McDermott	Unison



Agenda item 1: Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

- Fiona Hogg (FH) welcomes everyone to the meeting and previous meeting minutes are accepted by group as correct.
- FH confirms the meeting is quorate.

Agenda Item 2: iMatter 2025 Results and Key Findings

- Victoria Freeland (VF) provides an update on iMatter 2025 results and key findings, these are:
- In 2024, NHSScotland response rate is 57%, a decline of 1% from last year.
- Action plan KPI has remained static overall at 56% completion within the eight weeks and the overall EEI score has increased by 1 point to 77.
- Response rates in total, we issued 207,397 questionnaires which is 607 more than in 2024. From these we received 119,173 usable responses which was 361 less than 2024.
- Decline of 1 point from last year, but still higher than in 2021 and 2022.
- Pre pandemic response rate was higher.
- Thirteen boards have seen a decline in response rates this year, the largest decline being 6% followed by two boards each declining by 4%.
- Ten other boards declined between 1 and 3% each.
- Six boards have increased response rates this year with the highest percentage being an increase of eight, followed by one board on six and four boards who've increased between one and three each.
- EEI score has increased by 0.2. However, due to a rounding difference, this has meant an increase of 1 overall, rising to 77 this year. This is a statistically significant improvement at 0.2 and it's equal highest score across the 10 years of iMatter, joint with 2023.
- Differences between Board EEI scores show that eight boards have increased from last year and four have decreased, with ten remaining static. The highest movers are 3% up and 2% down.
- Responses to the recommendation and patient services questions indicate that while two recommendation scores remain unchanged, attention should be given to the team-related question, which is still at 85—the same as last year.
- The board results show three positive results, seven negative and 12 neutral.
- Also equal to last year, was “happy for a friend or relative to access services” which a result of 77.
- One point increase for the question “I would recommend my organisation as a good place to work”, which has risen to 75 from 74 in 2024.
- Board results show, eight boards trending negative, 4 neutral and 10 positive.

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- The response to the question “happy for a friend or relative to access services”, shows that just under 2/3 of the boards (fourteen boards), had an increase in their score with four remaining the same as 2024 and four decreasing. While the overall results are static, there appears to be a slightly positive trend by boards.
- VF discussed the strand scores from the staff governance standards which showed four of the strands have remained static against 2024, with a one point drop in the treated fairly strand.
- Across the boards, six improved in all staff governance strands.
- One board increased their scores across four of the five strands, which was a positive increase compared to the decline the previous year.
- Three boards declined across all the strands, and one board declined in four out of five.
- When looking at experience as an individual, team, or organisation, all questions remain static apart from “*I am given the time and resources to support my learning and growth,*” which has increased by one point from 74 to 75.
- Experience relating to team and Direct Line Manager shows that most results remain static, with two exceptions: one positive change where “*My Direct Line Manager is sufficiently approachable*” increased by one point to 89 compared to 88 in 2024, and one negative change where “*My team works well together*” dropped from 84 in 2024 to 83 this year.
- The lowest scoring items in this section are “*I feel involved in a decision leading to my team,*” which sits at 77, and “*I am confident performance is being managed well within my team,*” which sits at 79, although it is worth noting that these scores are still in the upper 70’s.
- Referring to the organisational questions, there are two positive results. Firstly, “*I would recognise my organisation as a good place to work*” has increased by one point to 75, and secondly, “*I feel senior managers and board members in my organisation are sufficiently visible*” has risen significantly from 55 in 2024 to 56. This question has historically been stubbornly low, so this improvement is notable.
- All other organisational responses remain static, “*involvement in organisational change*” continues to be the lowest scoring question at 55.
- Referring to raising concerns questions, “*I am confident I can safely raise concerns about issues in my workplace*” shows an overall score of 79, which equals that of 2024 and 2023. Twelve boards show no change, five are trending positively, and five are trending negatively. The highest and lowest changes are four points in each direction, with the rest showing differences of one or two points.



- “I am confident that concerns will be followed up and responded to” question shows an overall score of 73, which is equal to 2024 but lower than 2023 when it was 74. On this question, eight boards are trending neutral, eight trending positive, and six trending negative. The highest positive change was +4, and the biggest negative was -2, which occurred in three boards.
- When looking at these questions across demographics, the lowest confidence for both questions is shown by staff with a disability. The impact of having a disability versus not having a disability appears to influence response scores across all questions by approximately -5 points.
- Looking at overall experience nationally, the average score is 7.0. However, job group makes a significant difference. Local authority staff rate higher at 7.2, while NHSScotland sits at 7.0. The lowest scoring groups are ambulance services at 6.0, health science services at 6.7, and nurses, midwives, and medical and dental staff at 6.8. The highest scoring group for both local authority and NHS is senior managers, who sit at 7.5.
- Action plans: overall 56% of action plans were completed within the eight-week window, which equals last year and shows a nine percent increase from 2022 levels. However, there is significant variation by board, ranging from 25% to 95%. Four boards improved by 10 points or more, with the top increase being +30, followed by +15, +13, and +10. Two boards decreased by 10 points or more, one by -22 and one by -15.
- A new part of the report this year utilised anonymised information from action plans across all boards, analysed by AI tools within the Webropol system to identify common themes. These themes were grouped under the four questions asked of teams when creating action plans: what did we do well, what could we improve, desired outcomes, and actions to take.
- Communication emerged as a recurring theme across all four questions. Under “what did we do well,” clear and open communication was consistently highlighted as essential for operational success, with many noting improvements in communication strategies and feedback mechanisms. Under “what could we improve,” staff expressed a need for clearer, more transparent updates concerning organisational changes and decisions that impact their roles. Under “desired outcomes,” this translated into a need for better communication channels that allow for timely and clear updates regarding organisational changes, decisions, and opportunities for feedback. Finally, under “actions,” proposed solutions included structured team meetings, digital communication tools, and transparent feedback mechanisms to keep all staff informed and engaged.



- There is a general correlation between action planning and response rates, which is worth noting. It has been observed in previous years that there is often a strong correlation between action planning and the following year's response rates, which makes sense as it relates to staff feeling that their voices matter and that something has changed as a result.

Comments

- Tobias Kunkel (TK) clarified that the figures shown were percentages of respondents and noted that results appeared fairly static until the last couple of slides.
- He expressed concern about a widening gap between health boards, observing that those performing poorly seemed to be getting worse while boards that were already performing reasonably either improved slightly or maintained their position.
- TK suggested examining the bottom five or ten percent of boards to understand what is happening and proposed comparing overall outcomes and trends year-on-year, perhaps going back to 2020, to see if there is a consistent downward trajectory and what could be done to prevent it.
- FH acknowledged these points and noted that response rates and engagement can vary significantly between territorial and special boards, which makes interpretation challenging.
- Norman Provan (NP) reflected that the environment appears quite stable over time and reminded the group that SWAG's role is oversight rather than direct intervention, which lies with Ministers through annual reviews.
- He highlighted persistent low scores on "*involvement in decisions*", particularly at team level, where improvement should be easier, and stressed that the most effective way to move the dial is through local action plans developed after survey results are shared.
- NP expressed concern that uptake of these plans remains low, limiting impact, and provided historical context by recalling that SWAG previously changed its work plan based on survey feedback when whistleblowing results were poor, leading to significant policy changes.
- He noted that current trends do not require such systemic intervention, which is positive and reinforces the value of continuing to measure progress through iMatter.
- Elaine Watson (EW) agreed with NP's points and added that while national benchmarking is useful for competitiveness and understanding trends, real impact comes from local action.

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- She suggested focusing on five-year trends rather than going back to 2017 and emphasized that each board is responsible for driving change through local partnership.
- EW noted that the same issues—staff feeling unheard, lack of senior visibility, and limited involvement in decisions—remain the lowest scoring areas year after year, which is common in large organizations, and stressed that using data to support local change is key to improving results.
- Gordon McKay (GM) commented that overall scores were very similar to last year, with no more than a one percent shift either way, which could be seen as positive or disappointing depending on perspective.
- He observed a significant variation in satisfaction rates across occupational groups, with ambulance staff at one end and senior managers at the other, and requested deeper analysis on this.
- GM also raised concern about a notable drop in scores for staff with disabilities, particularly around raising concerns, and suggested further work on protected characteristics.

Agenda Item 3: AOB

- FH thanked colleagues for these observations and noted that they provide helpful ideas for how future data could be shared to better understand colleague experience.

Outcome: Agreement to continue using the data to inform SWAG's work.

Next meeting – 17 March 2026

[END]