

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This FAQ has been developed based on previous questions which the AHSCP has answered regarding Inch War Memorial Hospital.

This document will be updated throughout the engagement process so please get in touch if you have any further questions which we can answer here

To ask a question just email: integration@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

There has been correspondence to tell us that people are not sure where they can tell us about impacts for them and their family since the temporary closure of Inch Hospital. This can be done in the “Do you have any other comments or views...?” question in the survey.

Did Inch Community Hospital deliver Chemotherapy? No. Chemotherapy is a specialist treatment which is typically overseen through Aberdeen Cancer Centre at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, with some treatments and follow-up care (such as oral anti-cancer treatments) delivered locally where clinically appropriate. The oncology service is based on Ward 114 Oncology at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary.

Where can people access Stroke Rehab care and support?

Most people are initially treated in an acute stroke unit (usually at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary or Dr Gray's Hospital, depending on where they live). Before discharge, the stroke team assesses their rehabilitation needs and refers them to the most appropriate service.

For people who need intensive rehabilitation after leaving an acute hospital, NHS Grampian provides specialist stroke rehabilitation at the Stroke Rehabilitation Unit at Woodend Hospital in Aberdeen or at Philorth Ward in Fraserburgh.

Our Aberdeenshire Community hospitals will often care for people who have had a stroke and our dedicated Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) will wrap rehab support and care around the individual's needs both on a ward and in the community.

How many inpatient beds were being used before temporary closure in 2020?

There were 5 open inpatient beds.

Why were the number of inpatient beds reduced in 2019?

The decision to reduce the number of inpatient beds was taken due to long-standing challenges around recruitment and concerns around the ability to safely evacuate the building in case of fire.

Why did Inch War Memorial Hospital close in 2020?

An operational decision was taken by Aberdeenshire HSCP to temporarily close Inch War Memorial to inpatients in March 2020 with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The rationale for the decision was to consolidate staff at larger sites: Inch Hospital had been experiencing staffing problems for some time prior and had already been forced to reduce inpatient beds to ensure a safe level of staffing.

What does it mean that the hospital was ‘mothballed’ in 2020?

Mothballed is another way of saying ‘temporarily closed’.

Were other services being delivered from the hospital before temporary closure in 2020?

No

Why was the hospital not reopened after Covid-19?

The ongoing concerns around the suitability of the building for the provision of inpatient services and the continued re-deployment of staff meant that it was not operationally viable to reopen.

Who does the hospital building belong to?

NHS Grampian owns the building. Aberdeenshire HSCP has operational responsibility for running Health and Social Care services on a day-to-day basis.

Does the closure of the hospital building also include the Medical Practice building which is attached?

No, it doesn't.

Which parts of the hospital are not ‘fit for purpose’? What evidence is there to confirm this?

The configuration of the building is not suitable for the delivery of modern inpatient services. In addition, the building requires a new boiler.

Why was a Strategic Needs Assessment required?

The Integration Joint Board asked that a strategic needs assessment for residents of Inch and the surrounding area be undertaken to develop options for future delivery of health and social care services. The Needs Assessment was published in February 2022.

What engagement was undertaken to inform the Strategic Needs Assessment?

Engagement was undertaken through both a survey and focus groups in the community. Detail of the engagement can be found in the [June 2022 report](#) to the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board.

What happened following the publication of the Strategic Needs Assessment?

A Stakeholder Group was established, and an options appraisal process was undertaken. The options can be viewed in the [June 2022 report](#) to Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board.

Why weren't any options implemented? Why has there not been any progress since 2022?

Work did continue after the Integration Joint Board meeting in June 2022. The Strategic Assessment was submitted to Scottish Government in July 2022. This was the initial formal stage in the Scottish Capital Investment Manual (SCIM)

Business Case process, which was followed to secure funding for major NHS Capital Projects.

Unfortunately, the Scottish Government subsequently indicated that there was a lack of money nationally for capital investment. Due to commitments to other major capital projects, funding through NHS Grampian was also not possible.

Operational demands and limited staff capacity, alongside a lack of consensus in the local community, has hampered engagement on a wellbeing hub proposal whilst capital funding is unavailable. However, discussions had continued to take place between AHSCP colleagues and representatives from the Friends of Inch Hospital and Community, the Bennachie Community Council and Inch Medical Practice in 2023/24.

What has happened to the operational budgets previously held by Inch hospital?

Over the last three years the AHSCP has faced significant financial pressures and whilst the operational budget for Inch was initially kept intact it was used to offset overspends in other areas.

The budget for redeployed staff has now been transferred into the budgets for the areas where they now work and the remaining budget has been removed from our balance sheet.

Has an assessment been done for Inch to understand how many community hospital beds the population might require?

There is no recognised formula for the provision of Community Hospital beds.

Do Inch residents have to travel to Aberdeen if they need a Community Hospital bed?

People in Inch can be admitted anywhere in Aberdeenshire if they require a community hospital bed, however Inch residents are most commonly admitted to the community hospitals in Inverurie or Huntly. If anyone is acutely unwell, they would need to be admitted to ARI in Aberdeen, as is the case for all other Aberdeenshire residents.

I'm concerned that without a Community Hospital local to me in Inch, travel to Aberdeen (ARI) is the default for appointments, treatment and admissions, resulting in a considerable distance to travel.

If someone is acutely unwell an admission to ARI is likely to be the best option. This has always been the case. Our Aberdeenshire Community Hospitals support the delivery of a variety of clinics and day case treatments most of which are managed and delivered by secondary care clinicians.

I am unsure about the Low Emissions Zone (LEZ) and / or public transport when attending at or visiting at ARI in Aberdeen.

ARI is not in the Low Emissions Zone (LEZ).

THInC (Transport to Healthcare Information Centre) provides information and support for people attending healthcare appointments. <https://thinc-hub.org/>

Are the residents of Insch and surrounding area getting fair access to services compared to areas with Community Hospitals?

Insch residents can be admitted to any Community Hospitals – primarily at Inverurie and Huntly.

Are Jubilee (Huntly) and Inverurie Hospitals' inpatient beds currently always occupied to capacity?

We have a constant flow of patients through our Community Hospitals which we manage to be as efficient and effective as we can be.

If Insch patients are admitted to other Community Hospitals, does that not mean they are taking up beds for people in those communities?

Every resident of Aberdeenshire has access to all our Community Hospitals. Admission to a Community Hospital is not dependent on living in the town in which the hospital is located.

Will I have to travel out of Insch to attend a vaccination clinic? Is there another venue in Insch where pop-ups could take place?

The Aberdeenshire Vaccination services will be delivering a series of pop-up vaccination clinics, across Aberdeenshire (including Insch), to support the uptake of seasonal immunisations.

Is there anything that can be done to support transport to appointments in other towns?

THInC (Transport to Healthcare Information Centre) provides information and support for people attending healthcare appointments.
<https://thinc-hub.org/>

Why do we not have a Minor Injuries Unit in Insch? Where is the closest one?

The way in which the Minor Injury Service is accessed has changed. People should now call NHS 24 on 111 and they will support with an appointment at your nearest MIU.

The closest MIU to Insch is located at Huntly which operates 7 days a week in daytime hours.

What happens in winter for people getting treatment if snow blocks the access roads to Insch?

Poor weather, such as snow, impacts across services and we work with our Council colleagues and organisations such as COTAG to support people who require urgent care.

Can a local care home be used for palliative beds for the Insch community?

The AHSCP did explore the possibility of commissioning interim care beds at a local Care Home, however it was not viable at the time.

Do you have funding available to make the building fit for use to reopen it?

There is currently no Capital funding available.

Is it viable to consider the Friends Group's proposal to fund a new extension to modernise the building?

As above, there is currently no Capital funding available.

How will the engagement feedback collected now (in June / July 2026) be used?

The engagement feedback will be summarised and included in an engagement report. The feedback will also inform an Impact Assessment that forms part of the report to the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board. If there are any actions arising for the partnership to follow up on, this will also be highlighted in the IJB report.

Will the community be able to view the engagement report and when?

Yes, the engagement report will form part of the report to the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board in September 2026 (available publicly on the council website), and a link to the report will be added to the Insch Hospital page on the Engage Aberdeenshire website.

What type of Scottish Government Service Change process is the AHSCP proposal subject to for closing a hospital permanently?

The AHSCP has been working with Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) to follow their Service Change process.

HIS has advised that the AHSCP give communities up to 8 weeks to give their views on how the proposal impacts them.

What happens next if it is agreed that the Health and Social Care Partnership no longer require the use of the hospital building?

The Health and Social Care Partnership would hand the building back to NHS Grampian, who own the building. It would then be NHS Grampian's decision on what happens to the building and the next steps.

What are the plans for the public to access the memorial board should the building permanently close?

We would work with the community to ensure that the memorial plaque remains accessible.

Why are we seeing an increasing number of buildings being declared surplus, if they have been unused for years already?

There are processes which public sector organisations must follow when deciding on where best to deliver services from.