

Annual Report 2024/25



Contents

1. Executive Summary and Introduction
2. Fertility Scotland Network Governance
3. Stakeholder Feedback/Research
4. Fertility Scotland Network Strategy - Progress in 2023/24
5. Changes to 2023/2024 Work Programme
6. Fertility Scotland Work Priorities 2024/25
7. Finance
8. Network Programme Team

This document has been prepared by NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) on behalf of the Fertility Scotland Network. Accountable to Scottish Government, NSS works at the heart of the health service providing national strategic services to the rest of NHS Scotland and other public sector organisations to help them deliver their services more efficiently and effectively. Fertility Scotland is a collaboration of stakeholders involved in care of fertility, who are supported by an NSS Programme Team to drive improvement across the care pathway



Foreword

Welcome to the 2024/25 Annual Report from the Fertility Scotland National Network (FSNN), the national strategic network for fertility services in NHS Scotland.

Fertility Scotland works in partnership, across traditional organisational and geographical boundaries, to realise a programme of work that supports the delivery of fertility services in NHS Scotland.

The network was established in 2021, and over the past four years has made significant progress in establishing its structures and delivering work programmes to improve NHS fertility services in Scotland. Among numerous achievements in 2024/25 key accomplishments have included:

- Implementation of a national referral pathway for fertility services.
- National surgical sperm retrieval guidance
- Developing a proposal for national population-based planning of fertility services.

Abha Maheshwari (Clinical Lead) & Joanne Leitch (Scientific Lead)



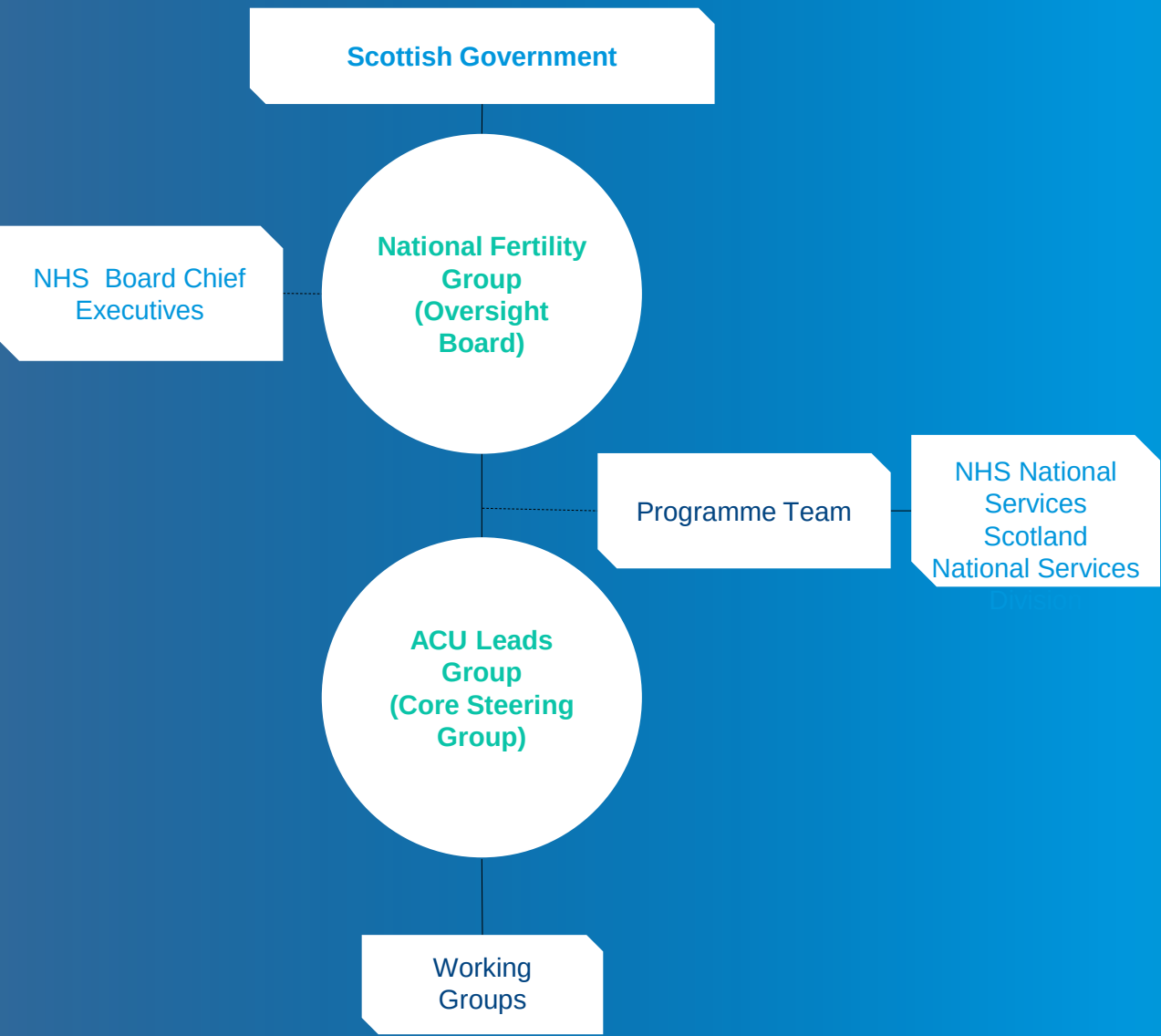
Introduction

This Annual Report aims to provide stakeholders with an update on the work of the Fertility Scotland national strategic network, focusing on key achievements during the financial year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

Achieving the progress outlined in the Annual Report would not have been possible without the energy, time, advice and expertise invested by network stakeholders.

The Network Programme Team would like to take this opportunity to thank members for their commitment and contributions, with special thanks to those who have given their time to chair Network work streams, as well as to Scottish Government for their continued support.

Governance Structure



Network Oversight Board

The Fertility Scotland Oversight Board function sits with the Scottish Government’s “National Fertility Group”, chaired by Mary Morgan (Chief Executive, NHS National Services Scotland).

The aim of the Board is to provide national strategic leadership to the network and advise NHS Boards and other partners in relation to the delivery of fertility services in NHSScotland, using the most up to date evidence base and in line with strategic local, regional and national NHS and Scottish Government priorities.

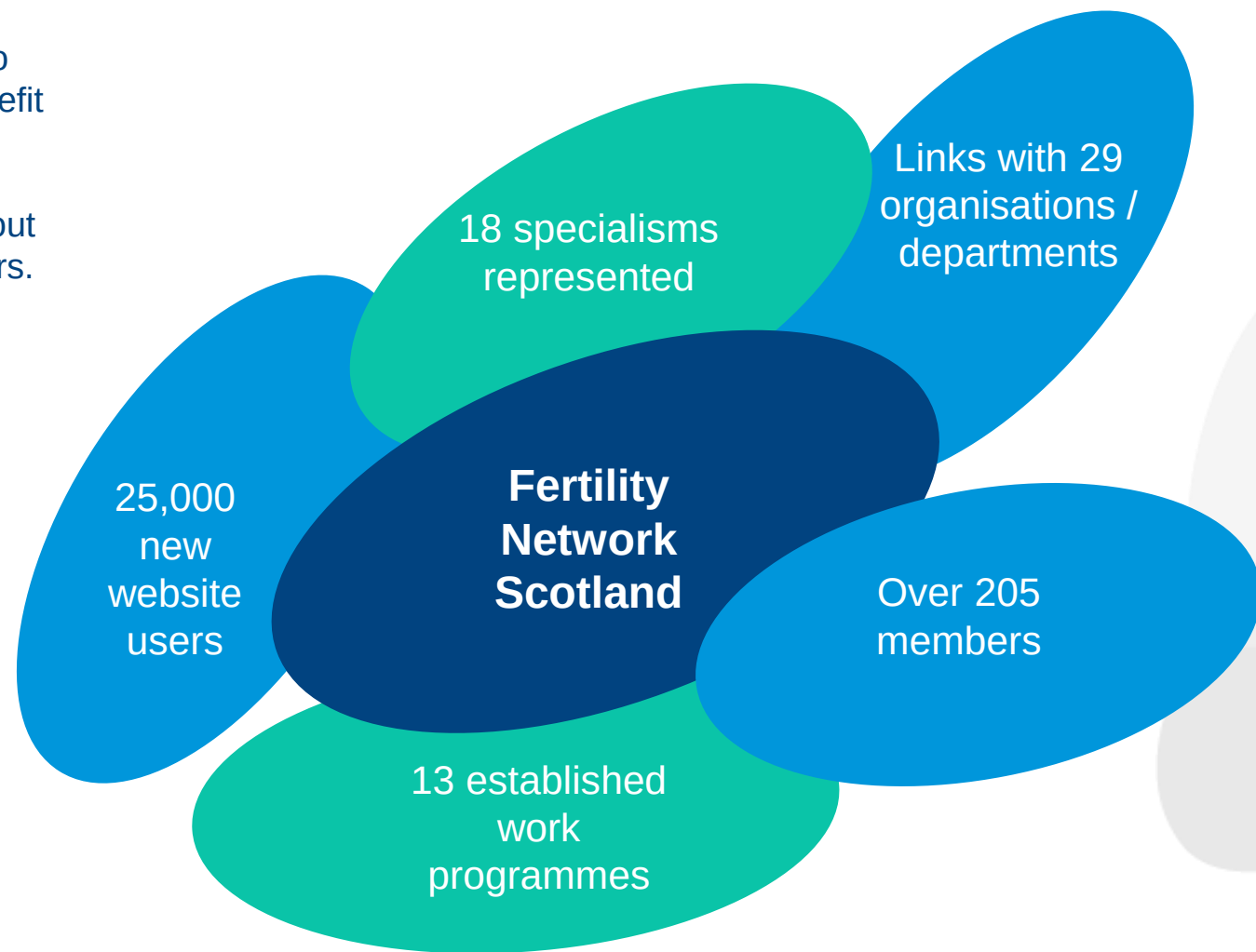
Network Core Steering Group

Reporting to the National Fertility Group, the Fertility Scotland Core Steering Group is responsible for overseeing the networks’ work programme to deliver on its agreed strategic priorities. The group works across geographical and organisational boundaries to support Boards with a ‘Once for Scotland’ approach to the planning, design and delivery of fertility services in NHSScotland. The Core Steering Group is co-located with the Scottish Government’s *Assisted Conception Unit Leads Group*. It is co-chaired by the Scottish Government Policy Lead, Sarah Corcoran, and the Network Lead Clinician, Abha Maheshwari.

Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout 2024/25 the network continued to build its engagement and dialogue with stakeholders to be able to progress its strategic priorities and deliver value and benefit to network stakeholders.

The diagram to the right summarises key information about the engagement the network has had with its stakeholders.





Progress in 2024/25

RAGB	Description	Objectives achieved
Blue (B)	The network achieved the objective.	8/14
Green (G)	The network is on track to achieve the objective by the agreed end date.	3/14
Amber (A)	A risk the network will not achieve the objective by the agreed end date but progress has been made.	3/14
Red (R)	The network is unlikely to achieve the objective by the agreed end date / major barriers to progress.	0/14

The table summarises the progress the network achieved in 2024/25 in delivering against the agreed work plan for the year.

Overall, more than 79% of work streams were either completed or are on track for completion as planned. There were some delays with the remaining work streams but progress has been made towards completion.

Network performance against a number of agreed Key Performance Indicators is summarised in the dashboard on the next page.

A more detailed overview of progress in each work stream is provided on the following pages.

RAGB status for each work programme

Blue (network achieved the objective)

Referral pathway (Guidance published)

Surgical Sperm Retrieval (Guidance published)

NHS Inform (Information published on website)

Seminar series (Seminars implemented as planned – Business as Usual)

Data Group (Three rounds of data gathering - Business as Usual)

Document Control (Guidance published)

Audit (Audit proformas published covering the HFEA Code of practise)

Consent (All consent forms on Fertility Consent reviewed and protocol published)

Green (network is on track to achieve the objective)

Overseas patients (Guidance under review)

Fertility Preservation Storage (Guidance under review)

Proposal for National Planning (Proposal completed awaiting outcome)

Amber (network is will achieve the objective, but not by due date)

Surrogacy (Guidance under review)

Access Criteria (Guidance under review)

Central Storage (Implementation is currently being reviewed)

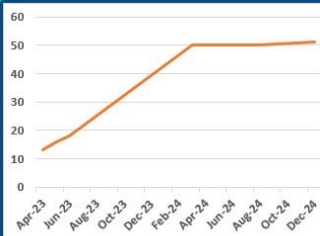
Fertility Scotland Dashboard



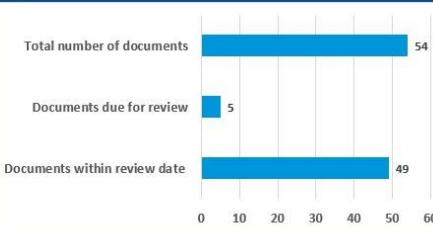
Fertility Scotland DASHBOARD



FSN Document Output



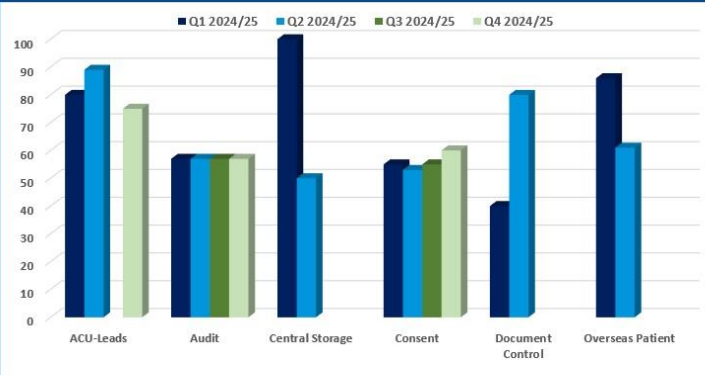
Document Review



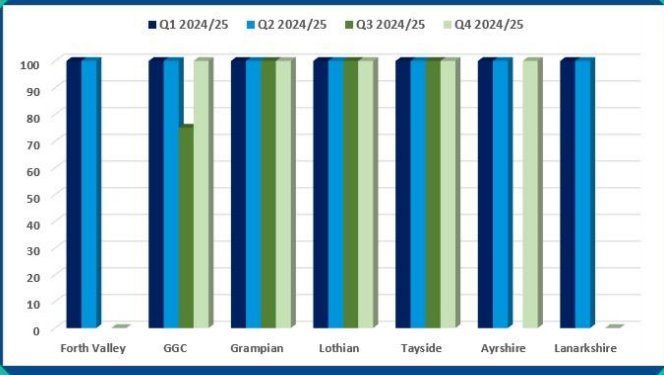
Current Milestone RAGB Status

Data as at Mar 2025		
RAGB	Description	Milestones achieved
Red (R)	The network is unlikely to achieve the objective by the agreed end date / major barriers to progress.	0/13
Amber (A)	A risk the network will not achieve the objective by the agreed end date but progress has been made.	3/13
Green (G)	The network is on track to achieve the objective by the agreed end date.	3/13
Blue (B)	The network achieved the objective.	7/13

% of members attending FSN meetings



% of Health boards attendance at FSN meetings



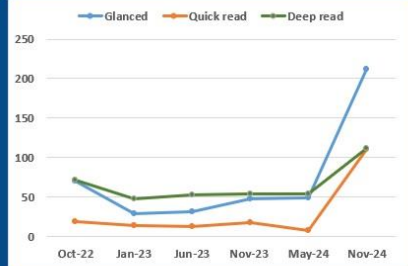
Number of stakeholders attending monthly seminars



Number of monthly fertility Scotland website users



% of stakeholders who read the Newsletter





Progress in 2024/25: Guidelines

I. Completed Work

1. Referral guideline now live, distributed to clinics and on “Right Decisions”. Training seminar also completed.
2. Surgical Sperm Retrieval guideline distributed to clinics.

II. Work in Progress

1. Access Criteria. Completion of this work is expected by June 2025.
2. Fertility preservation storage. Completion of this work is expected by July 2025.
3. Overseas visitors and treatment. Completion of this work is expected by September 2025.
4. Surrogacy. Completion of this work is expected by September 2025.

Deliverable

Referral

- Patient pathway from primary to secondary/tertiary treatment.

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: The pathway has been approved by ACU Leads and the National Fertility Group. A training seminar has been presented to fertility clinics and GP's.

Next Steps: Review document in two years.

Benefits



- i) To support standardisation of referrals across NHS Scotland.
- ii) To reduce number of visits to clinics by ensuring appropriate tests are performed or have been requested at the time of referral.



Progress in 2024/25: Guidelines

Deliverable

Surgical Sperm Retrieval (SSR)

- Guidance document for clinics treating patients requiring SSR.
- Information sheet for patients requiring SSR.
- Data monitoring sheet for measuring SSR outcomes.

***Scottish Government led, supported by FSN**

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: Approved by ACU-Leads and the national Fertility Group. Document distributed to clinics.

Next Steps: NA

Benefits



- i. Evidence based guidance to optimise chances of successful outcomes.
- ii. High quality uniform information for patients.
- iii. Monitoring outcomes for future evidence-based protocol development.

Surrogacy

- Guidance document for clinics treating surrogacy patients.
- Counselling forms for intended parents and surrogates.
- Information sheet for intended parents and surrogates requiring SSR.

Progress: Counselling forms and draft surrogacy guidance have been circulated to clinics.

Next Steps: Final approval for guidance document. Patient information to be completed following approval of surrogacy guidance.

- i. Support standardisation of surrogacy across Scotland.
- ii. Provide high quality patient information.

Overseas Visitors and Treatment

- Guidance document for clinics treating patients on overseas visitor passports.

Progress: Draft document has been prepared and reviewed by key stakeholders.

Next Steps: Seeking approval for legal advice.

- i. Standardisation of treatment of overseas fertility patient.



Progress in 2024/25: Guidelines

Deliverable



*Access Criteria

- Document clarifying access to NHS fertility treatment across Scotland.

*Fertility Preservation - Storage

- Support Scottish Government with delivering a protocol for patients storing gametes and embryos for fertility preservation purposes.

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: Draft document created and awaiting final approval.

Next Steps: Undergoing final review by Scottish Government.

Progress: A draft protocol is currently being drafted.

Next Steps: NA

Benefits



- i. Clarify areas of uncertainty raised over the past three years at the complex case multi-disciplinary meeting group.
 - ii. Reduce disparity between clinics.
-
- i. Provide uniform guidance that is compliant with the Health and Social Care Act 2022 and the Scottish Government fertility preservation guidance.

Progress in 2024/25: Communication and Education

I. Completed Work

1. NHS Inform. Three pages published via NHS Inform to provide information on general infertility, Intra Uterine Insemination and In-Vitro Fertilisation and ICSI.

II. Work in Progress

1. Seminar series. Seven seminars were delivered in 2024/25. The seminar series is planned to continue in 2025/26.

Deliverable



NHS Inform

- Publication of patient information covering.
 - General infertility.
 - IVF and ICSI
 - Intra uterine insemination

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: Published on NHS Inform website.

Next Steps: NA

Benefits



- i. High quality uniform information for patients.

Seminar Series (Professionals)

- Provide a monthly seminar series to professionals that are associated with NHS Fertility Services.

Progress: A seminar series has now been established.

Next steps: The seminar series will continue. Following outcome of the Customer Insight Research, timings and the format of the seminars will be reviewed.

- i. Reduce the requirements for each department to arrange their own CPD events.
- ii. Provide a forum to communicate best practice, including protocols generated by the network.

Progress in 2024/25: Service Development

I. Completed Work

1. NA.

II. Work in Progress

1. National Planning document submitted to Scottish Government for prioritisation. A decision is expected in 2025/26.
2. Central Storage – this is now led by the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS).

Deliverable



Proposal to National Planning

- Proposal submitted to the National Planning and Delivery Board to undertake a population-based planning approach to fertility service in Scotland.

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: Proposal has been completed and has submitted to the National Planning and Delivery Board.

Next Steps: Await outcome decision from the Board.

Benefits



- i. Decrease variation in service delivery and outcomes across Scotland.
- ii. Improve equity of access to fertility services.
- iii. Improve planning to meet increase demand with changing patient demographics.
- iv. Improve financial and work force sustainability.

Central Storage

- Support Scottish Government and SNBTS with delivery of central storage for gametes and embryos.

Progress: A Gap analysis was completed by the Fertility Scotland Network which has informed subsequent work led by SNBTS.

Next Steps: SNBTS is progressing an implementation plan.

- i. Improve recruitment of donors through national recruitment.
- ii. Provide donor recipients with a wider choice of donor selection.



Progress in 2024/25: Data

I. Completed Work

1. NA.

II. Work in Progress

1. Audit workgroup is Business as Usual.
2. Consent workgroup is Business as Usual.
3. Data collation and workgroup is Business as Usual.
4. Document Control is Ongoing.

Deliverable



Progress/Next Steps



Benefits



Data Group

- Implement a process to collate and review tertiary outcome data.
- Share data with the group three times a year for shared learning and to improve outcomes.

Progress: Five rounds of data capture have been completed with two additional meetings focussed on outcomes. Three significant national changes to fertility protocols.

Next Steps: Continue to review the data and make recommendations.

- i. Provide support and feedback to clinics to improve patient outcomes.

Document Control

- Implement a process to record and review national documents.
- Review documents that are still active and delete obsolete documents.

Progress: Protocol for management of documents completed. Process and timescales in place to annually review 54 network documents

Next Steps: Continue to review the documents

- i. Standardises process for document control.
- ii. Ensure documents reviewed annually in line with regulation.
- iii. Facilitate use of the documents.



Progress in 2024/25: Data

Deliverable



Audit Group

- Produce audit proformas across all tertiary fertility care centres to comply with regulatory requirements as detailed in the HFEA code of practise.

Consent

- Review consent forms on the Fertility Consent Platform.
- Produce a protocol and validation documents for clinics using the Fertility Consent Platform
- Produce a training package for clinics that use Fertility Consent.

Progress/Next Steps



Progress: Twenty-one audit forms have been created.

Next Steps: Continue to priorities areas for audits.

Progress: All twenty-one consent forms have been reviewed, validation documents circulate – and audit completed

Next Steps: Protocol and training package to be completed.

Benefits



- i. Streamlined process for compiling audit proformas that are HFEA and ISO15189 compliant.
- ii. Improved inspection outcomes and delivery of patient care by sharing audit outcome data.
- iii. Shared learning between centres.
- iv. Minimise duplication of creating audit forms.

- i. Avoid duplication of reviewing consent forms and producing a protocols and validation document.
- ii. Avoid duplication of producing a training package.



Work Priorities 2025/26

Deliverable

Fertility Scotland National Network and Scottish Government policy team have submitted a paper to the NHS Scotland National Planning & Delivery Board for the proposal to undertake a population planning approach and develop a Target Operating Model for Secondary and Tertiary Care NHS Fertility Services across Scotland

Benefits



A national population-based Target Operating Model will:

- Reduce geographical variation in patient outcomes.
- Consider equity of access to treatment.
- Consider the increase in demand for fertility services for some patient demographics.
- Improve financial sustainability.
- Improve workforce sustainability.



Finance

The Network is funded by an allocation from Scottish Government.

The Network operated within its budget for the financial year 2024/25.

Network Programme Team

The Network Programme Team comprises of:



Abha Maheshwari
Clinical Lead



Joanne Leitch
Scientific Lead



Carsten Mandt
Sen Programme Manager



N Prathalingam
Programme Manager



Tolu Oyedepo
Prog Support Officer

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#) except for graphic assets and where otherwise stated.

If you would like to find out more about the Network, please contact the team on:
NSS.FertilityScotlandNetwork@nhs.scot