

ARHAI Scotland Annual Report 2025

**An official statistics
publication for Scotland**



About this release

This release is by Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection (ARHAI) Scotland, an NHS Scotland Assure Service, part of Public Services Delivery Scotland.

This report reflects some of the key work delivered by ARHAI Scotland to support Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), Healthcare Associated Infection (HCAI) prevention, and tackling Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) during 2025. Data are provided for key HCAIs: infections which represent a threat to patient safety and can contribute to morbidity and mortality in an already vulnerable population. This report also highlights how ARHAI Scotland IPC experts have supported the vision of NHS Scotland Assure during 2025, strengthening workforce development, and IPC in the healthcare-built environment.

Main points

Key improvements, achievements and epidemiological updates for 2025:

National Infection Prevention and Control Manual (NIPCM)

- Following the completion of six systematic literature reviews, the NIPCM was updated to reflect new recommendations and good practice points on:
 - o The handling, transportation and management of linens in healthcare settings,
 - o The safe disposal of waste in line with the most recent version of NHS Scotland Waste Management Guidance Scottish Health Technical Note,
 - o The appropriate wearing and removal of aprons and gowns in health and care settings,
 - o The appropriate use of eye and face protection suitable for use in health and care settings,
 - o The use of footwear in health and care settings reflective of current practice.
- ARHAI Scotland worked with multisectoral stakeholders to update evidence-based guidance for transmission-based precautions and a full implementation package is planned.
- The Addendum for High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) was introduced into the NIPCM. The content was developed collaboratively with stakeholders, aligning Scotland with the rest of the UK through the adoption of a unified HCID assessment personal protective equipment ensemble.
- The NIPCM guidance development process was reviewed to improve transparency and support auditable decision-making informed by lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Care Home Infection Prevention and Control

- The Care Home IPC resources for gastro-intestinal (GI) and respiratory illnesses were updated, which support care home staff with the management of residents with suspected or confirmed infectious GI or respiratory illnesses.
- The Care Home IPC Standards Checklist was developed to support care homes in self-assessment, assurance and monitoring of compliance with the IPC standards to supplement existing local governance.

Reducing risk in the healthcare-built environment

- Guidance was implemented on the use of water in hospitals in Chapter 4 of the NIPCM, including the Healthcare Water Systems Associated Organisms Incident and Outbreak Checklist.

Clinical assurance for major infrastructure projects

- Eight Key Stage Assurance Reviews were completed by multidisciplinary teams including ARHAI Scotland IPC specialists, supporting the IPC progression of healthcare design and construction projects across NHS Scotland.

IPC workforce development

- The second (Design) and third (Construction) educational animations on IPC Considerations for the Design, Construction, Commissioning and Handover of Healthcare Water and Above Ground Drainage Systems were completed.
- Educational toolbox talks on IPC Risk in the Healthcare-built Environment were published, including resources developed specifically for healthcare construction staff and for building services teams.
- NHS Education for Scotland (NES) and ARHAI Scotland worked collaboratively to deliver key training and education, including:
 - o Supported students undertaking the postgraduate MSc module for IPC in a Global Context at Glasgow Caledonian University, providing expert input through course material development and live student engagement sessions.
 - o Provided subject matter expertise to inform NES Scottish Infection Prevention and Control Education Pathway (SIPCEP) modules, which are used across health and social care settings in Scotland.

- o Delivered a webinar with a focus on the prevention of catheter-associated urinary tract infections (CAUTI) in care homes to 200 staff across Scotland.
- o Delivered a training course on the practical application of epidemiological & surveillance concepts, statistical methods and outbreak management skills to 29 IPC professionals, providing knowledge and practical skills to support surveillance and outbreak investigations.
- Updated campaign web pages for world hand hygiene day and winter preparedness on the NIPCM website to highlight key IPC messages.

Surveillance and monitoring

ARHAI Scotland coordinates the national surveillance and monitoring programme for HCAI. *Clostridioides difficile* infection (CDI), *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteraemia (SAB) and *Escherichia coli* bacteraemia (ECB) infections are routinely monitored.

- The annual incidence rate of total ECB has been **increasing** since 2020, and the rate **increased** between 2024 and 2025. There has been an **increasing** trend in the annual incidence rate of SAB since 2020, although the rate between 2024 and 2025 has **remained unchanged**. Whilst the annual incidence rate of CDI **decreased** between 2024 and 2025, this followed an exceptionally high incidence rate in 2024.
- The annual incidence of healthcare associated ECB **increased** between 2024 and 2025, with an **increasing** trend since 2023. The annual incidence of healthcare associated CDI **decreased** between 2024 and 2025 following the exceptional year of 2024.
- The annual incidence of hospital acquired ECB has been **increasing** since 2023 and the average rate of hospital acquired SAB has been **higher** since 2020 than the rate in 2016-2019.
- The annual incidence of community associated CDI **decreased** between 2024 and 2025 following the exceptional year of 2024. Since 2020, there has been a **decreasing** trend in the incidence of community associated ECB.
- Incidence rates of CDI and ECB demonstrate seasonal variation, with **higher** rates being reported in July - September compared to overall annual rates.
- The majority of CDI, SAB and ECB cases were in people who reside in large or other urban areas. The rates of CDI, SAB and ECB were highest among people living in the most deprived areas of Scotland and in people aged 65 and over.
- The annual incidence rate of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) has been **increasing** since 2021, and the rate **increased** between 2024 and 2025.

- In 2025, 82.5% of patients audited underwent a clinical risk assessment (CRA) for meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), and 85.7% underwent CRA for CPE. Uptake of MRSA and CPE screening **increased** between 2024 and 2025, however MRSA screening, which is a Key Performance Indicator, remains below the 90% target.
- In 2025, there were 166 healthcare incidents and outbreaks reported to ARHAI Scotland (excluding those where key respiratory viruses or norovirus were the sole pathogen), and 552 COVID-19, influenza and RSV healthcare infection incidents and outbreaks.
- ARHAI Scotland undertook a review of the national HCAI surveillance programme in Scotland, conducting extensive stakeholder engagement to develop recommendations for the future of national surveillance, which have been provided to Scottish Government for policy decision making.

Antimicrobial use and antimicrobial resistance

- ARHAI Scotland ensured robust and collaborative One Health surveillance to monitor and respond to AMR threats, including the early detection of unusual phenotypes as per NIPCM Appendix 13. Alongside this, antimicrobial use was monitored, as was the multidrug resistance screening compliance.

Background

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of how ARHAI Scotland delivers expert intelligence, evidence-based guidance, clinical assurance and clinical leadership with the aim to reduce the burden of infection and antimicrobial resistance in health and care.

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Further Information

Find out more in the full report. Data and background information from this publication are available from our web page. The next release of this publication will be October 2027.

ARHAI Scotland and Official Statistics

ARHAI Scotland were formerly part of NHS National Services Scotland and are now part of Public Services Delivery Scotland. From 1 April 2026, NHS Education for Scotland and NHS National Services Scotland combined to form Public Services Delivery Scotland. Public Services Delivery Scotland works at the very heart of the health service across Scotland, delivering services critical to frontline patient care, supporting efficient and effective operation, and delivering training across NHS Scotland.

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