

Scottish Obstetric Cardiology Network

Annual Report

2025/26

The Network is supported by a dedicated programme team within Public Services Delivery Scotland (PSDS), consisting of:

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This document has been prepared by National Services Directorate (NSD) of Public Services Delivery Scotland (PSD Scotland) on behalf of the Scottish Obstetric Cardiology Network (SOCN). Accountable to Scottish Government, PSD Scotland 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. SOCN is a collaboration of stakeholders involved in care of obstetric cardiology who are supported by a PSD Scotland Programme Team to drive improvement across the care pathway.

Introduction

The Scottish Obstetric Cardiology Network (SOCN) was established on 1 September 2018 in response to the MBRRACE-UK report, “Saving Lives, Improving Mothers’ Care”, published in December 2016, which highlighted that cardiac disease remains the leading indirect cause of death in pregnancy.

The aim of the network is to facilitate clinical and other improvements in the area of obstetric cardiology. The network encompasses care for women who either have a pre-existing cardiac condition before pregnancy or go on to develop cardiac conditions during pregnancy.

The development of pathways, guidelines and documentation to support the delivery of services that are evidence based has been prioritised by the network. This will improve outcomes for women with cardiac disease and support implementation of optimal care to any woman with a cardiac condition who is contemplating a pregnancy, or has a pregnancy, in Scotland.

The network facilitates collaboration within and across the multi-disciplinary teams involved in a woman’s care at local, regional and national levels. Where relevant, SOCN continues to collaborate with other Networks, Societies, Organisations and Policy Teams to increase awareness of cardiac obstetrics and support development of guidance and its implementation.

Current Position

Activity during 2025/26 reflected national prioritisation set during a period of review. Alongside evolving national planning arrangements, Managed Clinical Networks were asked to focus activity on a number of core priorities.

Looking ahead, SOCN will build on its established approach by undertaking a Strategic Needs Assessment to inform the 2026/27 workplan and ensure priorities remain aligned to population need, current pathways, available data, and stakeholder perspectives. This remains consistent with the direction set by the Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework and Scotland's Population Health Framework (June 2025), whilst recognising that the Chief Executive Letter (CEL) 29 (2012) *Managed Clinical Networks: Supporting and Delivering the Healthcare Quality Strategy* remains the extant mandate for Managed Clinical Networks.

The priority for SOCN in 2025/26 was completion of the guidance, pathways, and information materials drafted by the Network.

The network continued to make use of technology and remote communications to progress work this year. This has continued to be effective by saving time on travel and promoting economic, climate friendly practices.

Highlights

Finalisation of SOCN materials

In early 2025, network activity focused on the finalisation of draft pathways, guidance and patient information documents developed by SOCN. The draft documents were reviewed and updated by Steering Group members prior to sharing in summer 2025 for consultation to the wider network membership, the Scottish Perinatal Network and the Network for Inherited Cardiac Conditions. The documents were further updated in response to consultation feedback and the publication of the updated European Society of Cardiology (ESC) Guidelines for 'the management of cardiovascular diseases during pregnancy' in August 2025.

The following guidance documents were endorsed by the SOCN Steering Group in March 2026 and were approved for publication following National Services Directorate (NSD) governance:

- Contraceptive options for women with cardiovascular disease
- Preconception care and counselling for women with cardiovascular disease
- Pregnancy & post-partum management for women with cardiovascular disease

A suite of acute resources (posters) were endorsed by the SOCN Steering Group in March 2026 and were also approved for publication following NSD governance:

- Chest pain in pregnancy & early postpartum: Triage & assessment
- Breathlessness in pregnancy & early postpartum: Triage & assessment
- Palpitations in pregnancy & early postpartum: Triage & assessment
- Algorithm for assessing maternal collapse & cardiac arrest
- Cardiovascular presentations in pregnancy & postpartum - MAKE A DIAGNOSIS
- Acute Presentation of Cardiovascular Disease in Pregnancy. Considerations or discussion and/or referral to Golden Jubilee National Hospital (GJNH)
- Assessment Algorithm for Pregnant & Postpartum Women Presenting with Signs & Symptoms of Cardiovascular disease (CVD)

The following patient information leaflets were endorsed by the SOCN Steering Group in March and April 2026 and, following an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Screening Assessment, are currently going through NSD governance.

- Preconception counselling clinic for CVD
- Symptoms in pregnancy – What is normal and what is not?
- Contraception and pregnancy with a heart condition – What do parents need to know?
- Contraception and pregnancy with a heart condition – What do teenagers need to know?
- Do you have a defibrillator? Could you become pregnant? Ask for advice

The following documents were shared with Steering Group members for their endorsement in April and May 2026.

Guidance

- Introduction to pregnancy and CVD and service structure in Scotland
- Labour and birth management plan for women with cardiovascular disease
- Preconception Counselling Checklist
- Risk stratification and location of care for women with cardiovascular disease
- Uterotonic drugs for the third stage of labour in women with cardiovascular disease

Acute Resource

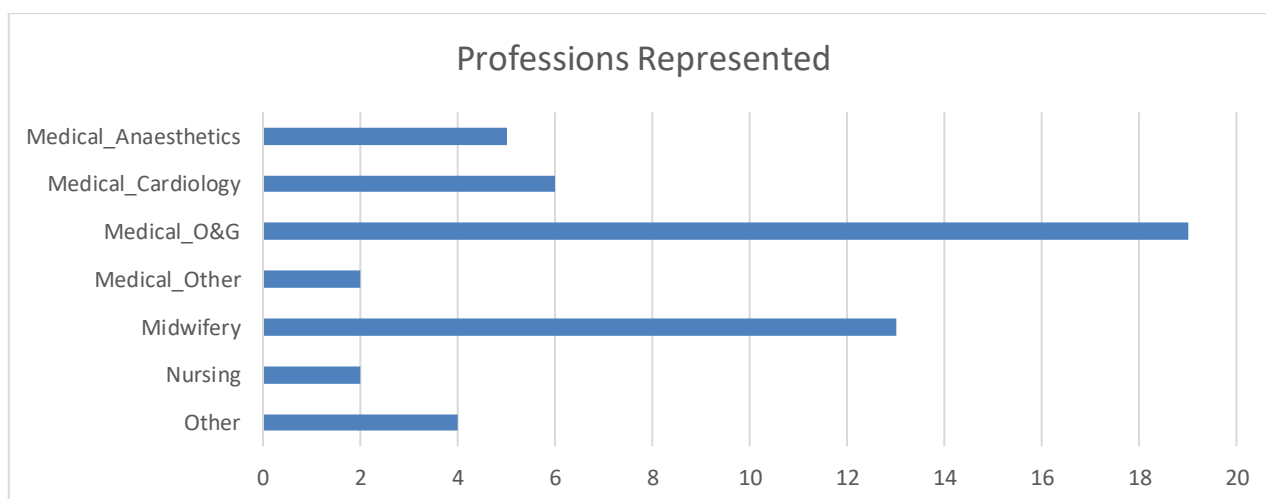
- Care of the pregnant or recently pregnant patient in the non-obstetric setting in pregnancy & early postpartum: Triage & assessment

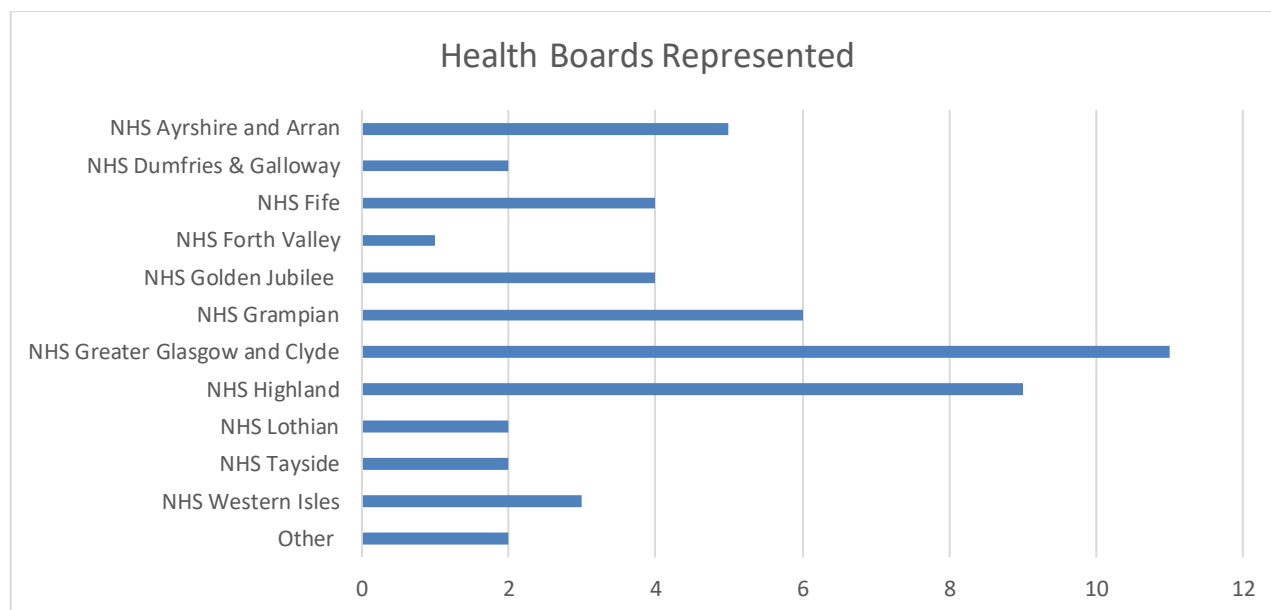
All documents will be published on the SOCN website following NSD governance.

A key focus of activity for the Network in the coming year will be to promote the documents widely and provide education around these to support their implementation across NHS Scotland.

Virtual Guideline Event

The Network hosted a Guideline Event on Friday 13 June 2025 online on MS Teams. The purpose of this event was to share and signpost to the guidance, pathways and information materials that had been developed by SOCN. In total, 51 people attended the event with the following spread of professions and Health Boards represented:





Evaluation forms were completed by 15 attendees (29% response rate):

- The majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' (67%) or 'agreed' (33%) that the event had met its objective 'Attendees have knowledge and understanding of the of the SOCN guidelines'.
- Attendees were asked to score each presentation. The results reflected that the majority of attendees agreed that the 'delivery' and 'content' of each was 'excellent' or 'very good'.
- When asked what people valued most about this event, respondents highlighted having greater awareness of the guidelines and signposts to information sources that can aid discussions with patients.
- All respondents said the event was 'very effective' (73%) or 'effective' (27%) in changing their practice.

Some of the ways attendees stated this event would change their practice included:

- Developed my knowledge and referral pathways.
- Learning from this event will aid my discussion pre pregnancy with patients I see through fertility services and help me care better for the patients with cardiac issues we see through the obstetric service.
- More awareness of CVD in women, their care/ treatment and available signposting.
- Raise awareness and profile of the new SOCN guidance amongst the wider perinatal community.

When asked to rate the event for event organisation, event format and event advertising the responses were:



Fifteen respondents would recommend this event to their colleagues. Twelve respondents said the learning from this session to contribute to their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirement for revalidation. The event provided 104 hours of CPD to health care professionals.

Looking forward – 2026/27

The Network will undertake a strategic needs assessment to inform the workplan for the next 3-5 years and agree clear, evidence-based, and measurable outcomes. A scoping exercise is currently underway to support this work with a face-to-face meeting of Steering Group members planned for June 2026. This exercise is timely for the Network as it looks to re-engage with stakeholders and identify priority areas to focus future activity following the finalisation of the SOCN guidance.

A key focus of activity for the Network in the coming months will be to promote the guidance, acute resources and patient information due to be published in Quarter 1, 2026/27, and provide education around these to support their implementation across NHS Scotland. A virtual education event for health care professionals and trainees who support obstetric cardiology care is scheduled to take place in September 2026 following the launch of the guidance documents on the SOCN website.

Finance

The Network is funded through Public Services Delivery Scotland and operated within its approved budget during 2025/26.