



STATEMENT

16 October 2026

SCOT responds to reports on proposed national orthopaedic plan

The Scottish Committee for Orthopaedics and Trauma (SCOT) has noted with interest and some disappointment today's report in The Herald concerning a draft five-year plan for elective orthopaedic care in Scotland.

SCOT wishes to make clear that the plan referred to has not been shared with the Committee. As the body representing orthopaedic and trauma surgeons across Scotland, SCOT has a long and constructive history of working closely with the Scottish Government and NHS Boards to develop policy and strategy for Trauma and Orthopaedics. We are therefore disappointed not to have had sight of, or the opportunity to contribute to, a document of this significance. Without having seen it, we are unable to comment on its detail.

SCOT's long-held view is that the most effective way to improve orthopaedic care is to diagnose and address problems at Board and regional level. Waiting times are shaped by local factors, including theatre capacity, workforce, sterile services, bed availability and the balance between elective and trauma work. National plans risk overlooking the detailed, local reasons why problems arise, and with them the opportunity to address root causes.

The progress made in 2025-26 shows what can be achieved. Close collaboration between the Scottish orthopaedic community, Health Boards and the Scottish Government, supported by targeted funding, led to significant improvements in waiting times. SCOT is proud of the work of colleagues across the country in delivering this.

However, there is a risk that these gains will slow. There has been insufficient follow-up to that funding package to understand what worked and what did not, and that learning is essential to sustaining and building on the progress made. The move to sub-national planning set out in Scottish Government Directors' Letter DL (2025) 25, an election period and subsequent announcements on Board mergers have also been a considerable distraction, and may have drawn attention from core delivery.

SCOT remains hopeful and committed. We stand ready to share the clinical expertise and frontline insight of our members, and we look forward to continuing a close working relationship with the Scottish Government and NHS Boards to improve orthopaedic care for patients across Scotland.

About SCOT

The Scottish Committee for Orthopaedics and Trauma (SCOT) represents orthopaedic and trauma surgeons in Scotland. SCOT is a registered Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), registered with the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), charity number SC050609.

