

NHS Lothian Charity Christmas Grant Programme 2024

The NHS Lothian Charity Christmas Grant Programme supports NHS Lothian staff to enhance patient experience with festive activities and items throughout the Christmas and New Year period.

Beneficiaries

72% of Christmas Grants have been awarded to teams and departments in Edinburgh with the remaining grants spread out across sites and services in the rest of Lothian which is similar to distribution in 2024. The highest proportion of grants, 85 (42%), have benefitted patients receiving Scheduled Care (patients receiving planned inpatient or outpatient care), 54 grants (27%), supporting patients using mental health services or patients who are frail/elderly and 45 grants (22%) benefitted women's and children's services. A smaller number of 12 grants (6%) benefitted patients using Primary Care services and 5 grants (3%) to patients using Unscheduled Care services such as Emergency Departments.

82% of grants were awarded to wards and departments in acute and specialist hospitals (40 at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, 37 at St. John's Hospital, 33 at the Western General Hospital and 27 each at Royal Hospital for Children and Young People and Royal Edinburgh Hospital), 10% in Community Hospitals and Clinical Care Sites (mainly East Lothian Community Hospital and Midlothian Community Hospital) and 8% were used within a community setting or service (e.g. 5 in General Practices, 4 Community Dental Departments, 2 District Nursing teams and 1 service supporting people experiencing homelessness).

£92,650

of Christmas Grants were awarded in 2024 (a £7,650 increase compared to the 2023 Christmas Grant Programme)

Christmas Grant spend in 2024 vs 2023:

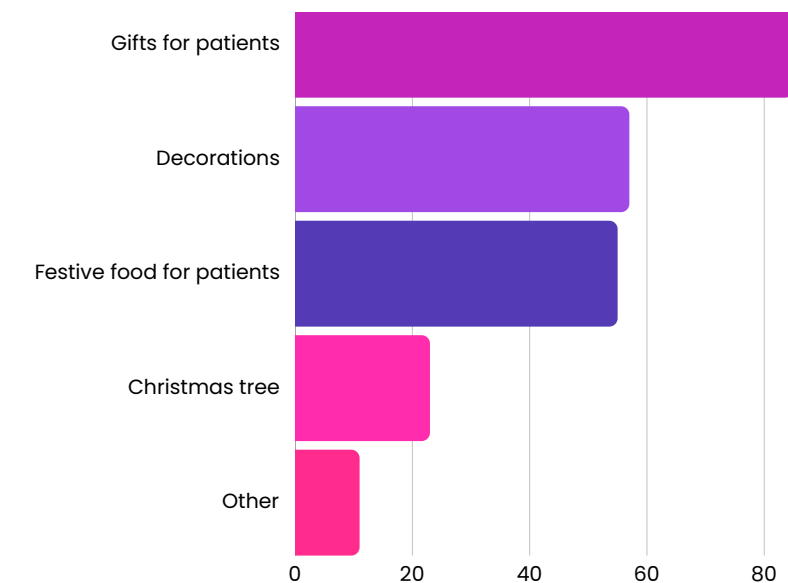
- NHS Lothian Charity awarded more grants in 2024, supporting 201 wards and departments, up from 188 in 2023. This growth is directly reflected in the increased overall funding distributed
- The average grant amount increased to £460 in 2024, a £10 rise from 2023, likely reflecting the general increase in the cost of goods like food and gifts
- Patient gifts remained the most popular spending category for the second year running. (The impact of these gifts is explored further in this report)



Festive patient party at the Chalmers Clinic

Approx. 20,500
patients benefitted from
the NHS Lothian Charity
Christmas Grant
Programme in 2024

What staff spent their Christmas Grant on in 2024:



How the Christmas Grant Programme made a difference to patients

95%

of staff reported patients
were happier

Some of the patients are bit depressed and disappointed by being in hospital over the Christmas period, they are so surprised and cheered up by decorations and presents."

– Ward Clerk, Ward 8 Hematology Department,
Western General Hospital



Decorations , Hematology Department, Western General

80%

of staff reported patients
felt more valued

This Christmas was especially difficult with very poorly patients from the flu outbreak, being able to give them gifts made them feel valued."

– Deputy Charge Nurse, Ward 23
Western General Hospital,



Party Food, Orchard Clinic, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

75%

of staff reported patients
had a better experience in
their ward/department

Some patients are scared at the prospect of having to have surgery, they told us they feel comforted by the lovely decorations and it makes things a bit less clinical and scary for them."

– Staff member, Preoperative Assessment Unit
Royal Infirmary Edinburgh



Decorations, PaediatricCritical Care Unit, RHCYP

63%

of staff reported patients
were more engaged with
staff

One patient cried when we gave him his gift as he was so grateful. He appreciated that we took the time to buy him something. It opens up the opportunity for patients to chat with staff and other patients."

– Senior Charge Nurse, Outpatient Dialysis
Royal Infirmary Edinburgh



Patient Christmas gift

How the Christmas Grant Programme made a difference to NHS Lothian staff

100%

of staff reported that their staff team or department felt more motivated

Staff felt motivated and proud to be able to support the needs of the patients and families over the festive period."

- Clinical Support Worker, Parents of Patients project, Royal Hospital for Children and Young People



Staff from Healthy Respect and Young People's Sexual Health Clinics at Chalmers, Pennywell and Croft Street getting in the festive mood!

94%

of staff reported that their staff team or department were less stressed over this time

I got lots of positive feedback about people feeling happy coming into work over the festive period."

- Ward Clerk, Ward 220, Royal Infirmary Edinburgh



94%

of staff reported that the staff team had improved mental wellbeing

It reduced stress for staff. Knowing that patients are supported through thoughtful initiatives allows staff to focus more on their clinical responsibilities."

-Nurse, Braids Ward, Royal Edinburgh Hospital



Benefits for families and carers

The principal aim of the Christmas Grant Programme is to benefit patients but the funding also provided comfort and support to some patients' families and carers.

Staff shared some examples:

"Many families feel a sense of guilt when they can't provide the usual holiday experiences for a loved one in the hospital. The funding helps to fill that gap, alleviating feelings of helplessness by ensuring their loved one is still experiencing joy and care." - Nurse, Braids Ward, Royal Edinburgh Hospital.

"The decorations put families at ease, relieved anxieties and put a simple smile on their faces and showed that we cared about their loved one." - Senior Charge Nurse, Emergency Department, St. John's Hospital.

Spreading the festive cheer across NHS Lothian, a spotlight on....

Addressing inequalities – Harm Reduction Team at Spittal Street Clinic throw Christmas party for homeless patients

The Christmas Grant ensures that all patients throughout the community can participate in festive events and activities, creating opportunities that wouldn't normally exist. Caitlyn, a Prevention Worker from the team, shares: "All of our patients suffer from health inequalities and many of them are struggling with homelessness. Accommodation for many of them is precarious and their situations range from street homeless to temporary accommodation. With the funding, we bought 40 patients hats, gloves and travel mugs to help keep them warm and make them feel special. Some of our patients kept their gift bags until Christmas Day as they wouldn't have anything else to open. We were able to bring them into a safe space and put on a traditional Christmas party for them with party food, a quiz and a Christmas movie with hot chocolates. Our patients struggle with substance use and often their interactions with us and with each other are entirely based on this. By having a staffed Christmas party it enabled them to relate to each other without 'drug talk'. A few weeks after Christmas and lots of them are still coming in wearing their hats and gloves we gave them. There is so much I could say for what a difference the Christmas Grant made but the bottom line is that our patients felt valued and special. Their day-to-day lives can be filled with stress and struggle and for an afternoon we were able to feed and water them, we were able to show them that they deserve to have a nice Christmas and that they are cared for."

Helping reduce feelings of isolation – gifts for patients in the Braids Ward, Royal Edinburgh Hospital

In 2024, the most popular use of the funding was for patient gifts. Staff in the Braids Ward appreciate that for many of the 14 patients on the ward these gifts may be the only ones they receive, as they may not have close family nearby. Staff told us they value the opportunity to use the funding to choose personalised gifts based on each patient's individual preferences and needs. Previously, many staff members purchased gifts for patients out of their own pockets, so this funding has also positively impacted their financial wellbeing, meaning more money available towards their own personal spending at Christmas.

A nurse from the Braids Ward at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, explained: "Patients have expressed that Christmas in hospital can be a depressing and lonely time as they are away from loved ones and the comforts of home. However, the Christmas Grant Programme plays a vital role in brightening their experience and supporting their wellbeing. Patients expressed feeling valued as we were able to buy gifts specific to each individual rather than generic gifts. Patients tell us they feel cared for and supported during a time that can otherwise feel isolating."



Some of the gifts given to patients with Christmas Funding 2024

NHS Lothian Charity is delighted to be able to provide a grant programme that enables so many to benefit over this festive period. We recognise that our funding is not even half the story and without the time, effort and generosity of the NHS Lothian staff team (and often their families too) such positive outcomes achieved would not be possible.



Report compiled by Rebecca Caulfield, Evaluation Manager, NHS Lothian Charity