

The provision of Imaging services for remote communities: A service case study with NHS Orkney

D. Brown, K. Grieve, C. Wilson (2026)

BACKGROUND

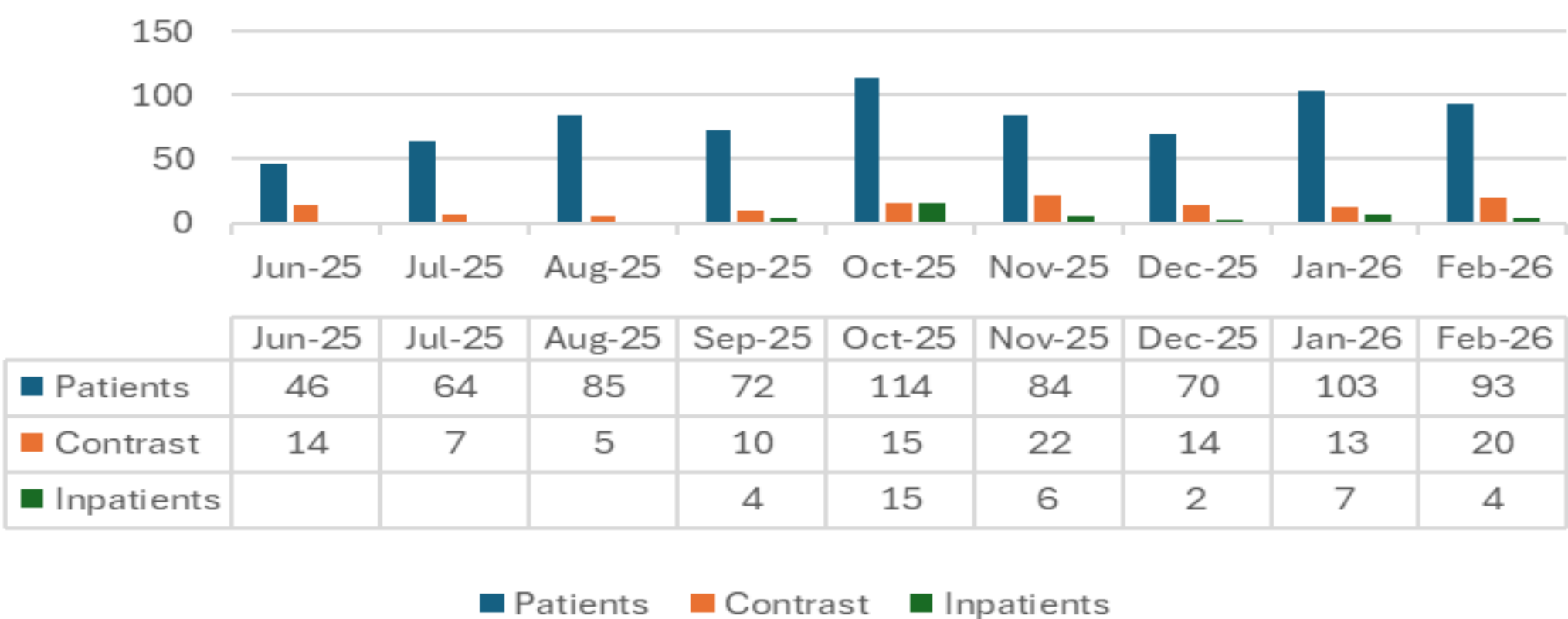
The UK has several remote populations and residents of Orkney are a very good example of this where there is no permanent MRI scanner on the island. This means that to undergo a scan they must travel to mainland UK to undergo a scan. This presents challenges for trust both logistically and financially.

INTRODUCTION

In June 2025 Compleo health worked with NHS Orkney to deliver and provide a long-term solution by providing a Philips Ambition S Low Helium MRI System. This case study will demonstrate the impact that the provision of this scanner has had to the population of Orkney in respect of the accessibility for their patients, the patient experience, the financial impact and the efficiency of the equipment.

METHOD

Review of statistics of patients accessing the system, the financial impact of patients having to travel for their scan, highlighting examples of patient feedback received from the service and demonstrating the activity time of the scanner.



Patient volumes inclusive of contrast and inpatients

RESULTS

Patient feedback has been very positive around the service with repeated reference to the ease of accessing the service, reduced travel and the care provided by the staff operating the scanner. The scanner also features the ambient experience which helps with patient anxiety by their ability to watch relaxing videos during the scan.

Between June 2025 and March 2026, the service scanned a total of 731 patients. Within the patient group are 120 contrast examinations, and 38 inpatients

Prior to the service commencing if a patient needed an MRI scan, they would travel to mainland Scotland. This would be a day's worth of travelling for the patient, which would cost approximately £450 per person if they went on their own. If the patient cannot travel alone, it would cost approximately £1000. There would also be the cost of accommodation.

On the premise of every patient travelling alone and for returning the same day, without an escort, the service has saved approximately £328,950 based on the scan volumes presented here.

Due to the stability of the system on site at Balfour, the service has had no downtime due to mechanical failure or maintenance. All preventative maintenance has been scheduled around the days of operation meaning no additional delays to patients being seen.

In the previous twelve months, only two patients agreed to MRI scans, with others declining due to the need to travel to Aberdeen. This barrier compromised diagnostic accuracy and increased the risk of suboptimal

METHOD



Compleo Health's MRI unit photographed on site at Balfour Hospital



Compleo Health's representative supporting the system setup and protocol development with the team from Balfour Hospital, Orkney

CONCLUSION

The outcome of the service going live at Balfour is that patients had earlier access to a service to improve the journey of care. As a result, the waiting list has reduced dramatically compared with waiting to travel to the mainland, also impacting the waiting list on the mainland. Patient feedback indicates 100% of patients say it has improved their access to care, was preferable to travelling to the mainland and that they felt less stress and anxiety.

Finally, the availability of an MRI scanner on the island has benefitted staff from the perspective of being able to train in a new modality.

Compleo Health is proud to support Balfour in this endeavor and to work in partnership with both the NHS trust and the local population.

CASE STUDIES

There have been numerous cases where the service has improved access to services and benefitted patients on their journey. A small number of examples can be seen below:

- A patient with a rectal tumour saw the consultant on the 4/2/26 and had a colonoscopy on the 09/03/26. A post scope CT and MRI was requested that day, with the CT scan scanned on 11/3/26 and MRI on 20/3/26.
- A patient with a glioblastoma attended A&E 23/3/26. Symptoms were dizziness, double vision and nausea for 1/52. A CT scan was done that day, which confirmed the brain tumour. The MRI was performed on 01/04/26 and the tumour was then removed on 13/4/26.
- An incidental finding of a Pituitary adenoma. The patient had left sided facial paraesthesia, forehead pain, left nasal obstruction. An MRI sinuses was completed on 10/12/25. This would have been 19 weeks wait if performed in NHS Grampian even though it was vetted as semi urgent scan.

for island residents

PATIENT FEEDBACK

- Faster scan and no travel, grand!
- More accessible, quicker.
- Easier access.
- Less stress without travel, the staff were much better.
- The staff were fantastic and really took the time to talk me through the scan and reduced my anxiety a lot.

Keep the service please!