Aim
The Scottish Government Healthcare Quality Strategy for NHSScotland has three main Quality Ambitions, Person-centred, Safe and Effective. These Quality Ambitions provide the focus for all our activity to support the aim of delivering the best quality healthcare to the people of Scotland and through this making NHSScotland a world leader in healthcare quality. We believe NHSScotland is the first health service in the world to adopt this national approach to improving patient safety.

Central to the successful delivery of the Safe Ambition, the Scottish Patient Safety Programme (SPSP), led by Healthcare Improvement Scotland, was launched in January 2008 to improve the quality and safety of care in all acute hospital settings across NHSScotland. Working with key organisations, including the Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland (NES), NHS boards, Royal Colleges, world leading experts in patient safety and patient representatives, the SPSP aims to reduce mortality by 15% and adverse events by 30% by the end of 2012.

Strategy for change
The SPSP recognises the complexities involved in delivering modern healthcare, and has worked with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), to design a package of standardised approaches to care. This package of evidence-based actions, known to improve patient safety, will be delivered to every patient, every time, under the five workstreams of the SPSP: Critical Care, General Ward, Medicines Management, Peri-operative and Leadership.

What are we doing?
All 14 territorial NHS boards and the Golden Jubilee National Hospital are actively testing and implementing interventions and reporting their data for improvement every month. Each NHS board has identified pilot sites and scale up plans. A Scottish Learning Network has been developed to share practice and spread new knowledge. A Scottish Improvement Academy is being developed to provide training, coaching and support to NHS staff. The SPSP has developed a framework to ensure all healthcare organisations are delivering the best quality healthcare to their patients. The framework is based on the five workstreams and requires providers to achieve a consensus of training in quality improvement amongst all healthcare professionals.

How are we doing it?
The SPSP supports NHS boards in implementing interventions through:

- facilitating learning sessions - eight national learning sessions attended by over 3500 staff
- building capacity and capability for improvement methodology events
- developing a Scottish Faculty, through the SPSP Fellowship Programme and other developmental programmes, and
- developing a cadre of Improvement Advisors nationally across NHSScotland.

Who is doing it?
Interventions and bundles are being tested and implemented by frontline NHSScotland staff including nurses, allied health professionals, doctors and consultants and it is this multidisciplinary approach which has contributed to the success of the programme.

Measurement of improvement
The 6th SPSP Learning Session in October 2011 asked NHS boards to review the data behind unexpected deaths and develop their local improvement plans on how to reduce them. The Scotland-wide Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratio (HSMR) data is showing a 9.3% reduction since the Programme was launched in 2008. However some hospitals have achieved an 18% reduction.

Data showing progress, such as number of days without infection or hand hygiene compliance, is often displayed publicly within wards, providing further encouragement and motivation for frontline staff. Once reliability has been achieved and sustained in one ward, the processes and interventions are then spread to other wards and areas.

Sustaining the change
The SPSP now has developed, with support from IHI, NES and the Health Foundation, its own experts in Improvement Science who can facilitate, coach and demonstrate tangible improvements in the service. The development of these Scottish Improvement Advisors, Fellows and Faculty, to continue the work started with IHI, has meant the latest Learning Session was delivered by experts from within NHSScotland.

Conclusion
The SPSP demonstrates that a National approach can radically improve patient care. However, this improvement has not been achieved without some challenges. Ensuring a multi-disciplinary approach to implementing change packages in all areas is essential to the sustainability of any improvement programme in healthcare. The medical professional bodies, Royal Colleges and universities are also encouraged to become involved at an early stage to achieve a consensus of training in quality improvement amongst all healthcare professionals.

Building a sustainable infrastructure takes time. Pick your leaders with care, and support your advisors with coaching and training to develop, in the knowledge you are really making a difference, not only to the lives of the patients you are serving, but also creating a great and rewarding environment in which to work.