Reducing cardiac arrests: How we’re improving care for people at risk of deterioration

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Introduction
The Scottish Patient Safety Programme (SPSP) is a unique national initiative that aims to improve the safety and reliability of health and social care and reduce harm, wherever care is delivered. The SPSP Acute Adult programme includes the deteriorating patient workstream, which aims to reduce mortality and harm for people in acute hospitals by reliable recognition and response to acutely unwell patients.

SPSP supports this by focusing on:
- early recognition of acute physiological deterioration through the National Early Warning Score (NEWS) (see Figure 1)
- the implementation of a process for structured response and treatment for sepsis
- person-centred care planning based on an individual’s clinical condition and goals of care, and
- effective communication of people at risk and their treatment plan.

Method
A driver diagram, change package and measurement plan were developed. Figure 2 describes the range of interventions covered in the change package.

Results
An improved approach to identifying and treating deteriorating patients quickly and effectively is contributing to a reduction in cardiac arrest rate by 28%. This means that, on average, there are 25 fewer people per month who are suffering this harmful experience in acute hospitals in Scotland.

Conclusion
The changing culture and understanding of staff within NHSScotland have all been key to achieving better outcomes for people, through improved processes to identify and respond to deteriorating patients.