



Scotland's
Mental Health
and Wellbeing
Our Vision & Priorities



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



COSLA

Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Executive Summary



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Our vision

Our vision is of a Scotland, free from stigma and inequality, where everyone fulfils their right to achieve the best mental health and wellbeing possible.

Our summary outcomes

Our outcomes allow us to show how the actions we are taking are resulting in improvements over time.

1 Improved overall mental wellbeing and reduced inequalities.



2 Improved quality of life for people with mental health conditions, free from stigma and discrimination.

3 Improved knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing and how to access appropriate support.



4 Better equipped communities to support people's mental health and wellbeing and provide opportunities to connect with others.

5 More effective cross-policy action to address the wide-ranging factors that impact people's mental health and wellbeing.



6 Increased availability of timely, effective support, care and treatment that promote and support people's mental health and wellbeing, meeting individual needs.



7 Better informed policy, support, care and treatment, shaped by people with lived experience and practitioners, with a focus on quality and recovery.

8 Better access to and use of evidence and data in policy and practice.



9 A diverse, skilled, supported and sustainable workforce across all sectors.

Our priorities

Through the actions laid out in the Delivery Plan for this Strategy, we will seek to:

Tackle mental health stigma and discrimination where it exists and ensure people can talk about their mental health and wellbeing and access the person-centred support they require.



Improve mental health and wellbeing support in a wide range of settings with reduced waiting times and improved outcomes for people accessing all services, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and psychological therapies.

Improve population mental health and wellbeing, building resilience and enabling people to access the right information and advice in the right place for them and in a range of formats.

Ensure people receive the quality of care and treatment required for the time required, supporting care as close to home as possible and promoting independence and recovery.

Increase mental health capacity within General Practice and primary care, universal services and community-based mental health supports. Promote the whole system, whole person approach by helping partners to work together and removing barriers faced by people from marginalised groups when accessing services.



Continue to improve support for those in the forensic mental health system.



Expand and improve the support available to people in mental health distress and crisis and those who care for them through our national approach on Time, Space and Compassion.

Strengthen support and care pathways for people requiring neurodevelopmental support, working in partnership with health, social care, education, the third sector and other delivery partners. This will ensure those who need it receive the right care and support at the right time in a way that works for them.



Work across Scottish and Local Government and with partners to develop a collective approach to understanding and shared responsibility for promoting good mental health and addressing the causes of mental health inequalities, supporting groups who are particularly at risk.



Reduce the risk of poor mental health and wellbeing in adult life by promoting the importance of good relationships and trauma-informed approaches from the earliest years of life, taking account where relevant adverse childhood experiences. We will ensure help is available early on when there is a risk of poor mental health, and support the physical health and wellbeing of people with mental health conditions.

Introduction

This Strategy lays out our approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing of everyone in Scotland. We describe what we think a highly effective and well-functioning mental health system should look like – with the right support available, in the right place, at the right time, whenever anyone asks for help.

As well as ensuring that specialist mental health services are available whenever they are needed, we know that mental health does not just mean mental illness. The ambitions of this Strategy cover all levels of need, from maintaining good mental wellbeing, to the support available in our communities, to recognising that there are many underlying social determinants, circumstances and inequalities that can affect people's mental health.

This document therefore sets out the shared vision of Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to improve mental health and wellbeing – including the role of other key areas such as poverty, housing, employment and our communities.

Alongside this Strategy, we will publish a Delivery Plan, showing the specific actions that we will take, and when they will be undertaken.

Our vision

Our vision is of a Scotland, free from stigma and inequality, where everyone fulfils their right to achieve the best mental health and wellbeing possible.

In order to achieve this, we will:



Promote positive mental health and wellbeing for the whole population, improving understanding and tackling stigma, inequality and discrimination;



Prevent mental health issues occurring or escalating and tackle underlying causes, adversities and inequalities wherever possible; and



Provide mental health and wellbeing support and care, ensuring people and communities can access the right information, skills, services and opportunities in the right place at the right time, using a person-centred approach.

We seek to have a stronger emphasis and focus on promoting good mental health and wellbeing for all, and also on early intervention and prevention. We will do this while also ensuring high-quality services are in place so that people can access the right support at the right time to meet their needs.



Our principles

The Strategy, and the actions in the forthcoming Delivery Plan, are based on 10 core principles. Our work is:

1 Founded on equality and human rights.



2 Focused on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, families, communities and society, supporting those who are impacted by mental illness.

3 Outcomes-focused.

4 Trauma-informed and trauma-responsive.



5 Based on a 'whole person' approach. This means looking at a person and their wider circumstances (like housing, relationships, physical health, employment etc.), not just their mental health.

6 Driven by data and evidence.

7 Developed and delivered in partnership with partners, stakeholders and the public.



8 Based on a 'no wrong door' approach. This means anyone asking for help with their mental health and wellbeing should be able to access the right support, care and treatment, regardless of where they first request it.

9 Informed by the voice of people with lived experience and practitioners, including marginalised groups, children and young people.

10 Based on a 'life stage' approach. This means it is focused on prevention, early detection, recovery and treatment of mental illness and poor mental wellbeing, identifying opportunities for minimising risk factors, enhancing protective factors and providing appropriate support at important life stages.



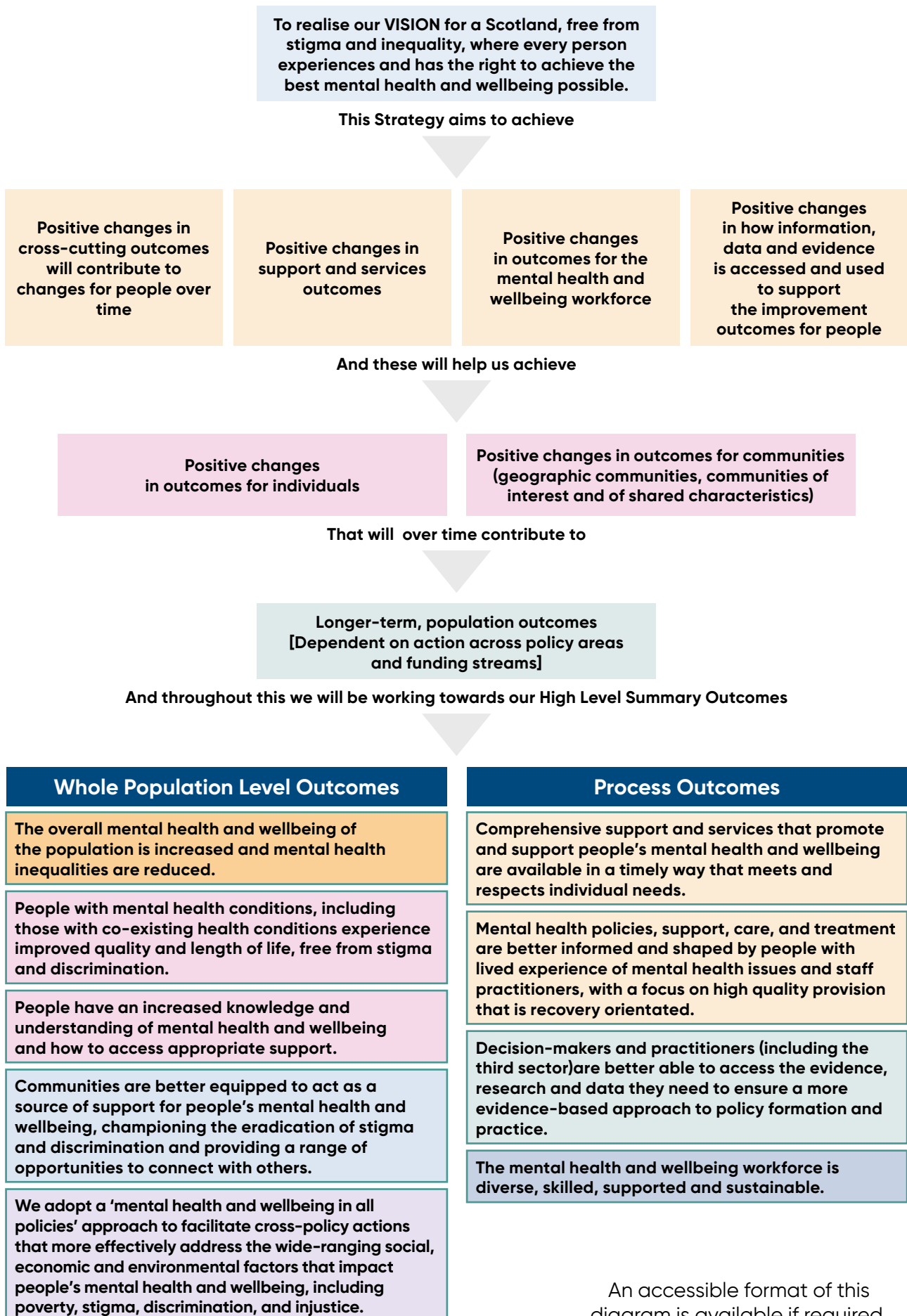
Outcomes

We want to be clear about what this Strategy is trying to achieve. Specifically, we want to lay out the changes that are needed and describe how the actions in the forthcoming Delivery Plan will lead to that change happening in a sustainable way. To do this, we have developed a set of outcomes. These are the differences or changes that we want to see as a result of this Strategy.

These outcomes are intended to be for the whole population of Scotland. People will have different needs and will require different support, care and treatment options to improve their personal outcomes.



Logic Model Showing the Achievement of Strategy Outcomes



Addressing mental health inequalities

We will lay out actions in our Delivery Plan which are designed to make substantial progress towards tackling mental health inequalities. These actions will continue to evolve over time.

“ Health inequalities are the unjust and avoidable differences in people’s health across the population and between different population groups. ”

Source: Scottish Parliament Health Inequalities Inquiry 2022

Some groups of people have poorer mental health than others. These health inequalities are a symptom rather than the cause of the problem. The causes of health inequalities arise from the unequal distribution of income, wealth and power, which can impact on wider life chances and experiences.

These societal conditions put some groups at greater risk of poor mental health than others. These conditions are commonly known as ‘social determinants’ and include traumatic and adverse experiences such as poverty, discrimination, loneliness, unemployment, lack of adequate housing, and lack of social and cultural opportunities.

Social and structural inequality in society means that those who face the most significant disadvantages in life also face the greatest risks to their mental health. This includes marginalised groups who experience discrimination, racism or exclusion (social, political, economic or environmental) solely based on age, race, sex, sexual orientation, disability or other characteristics protected by the [Equality Act 2010](#).¹ There are also other groups, such as veterans, refugees, children, young people, adults and families who are care experienced, people affected by substance use, those experiencing abuse or homelessness and those engaged in the justice system. Many people in these marginalised or hidden groups experience discrimination from parts of society, creating multiple discrimination and leading to significant marginalisation. This can be traumatic and cause long-term damage to their mental health and considerable adverse mental health impacts beyond those that the rest of the population face.

In many cases, these same groups of people also often experience less access to effective and relevant support for their mental health. When they do get support, their experiences and outcomes can be poorer. These inequalities in mental healthcare can exacerbate mental health inequalities.

We must take an intersectional approach, recognising that people are multi-faceted. Different experiences or aspects of their identity interact to affect their mental health, so we can most effectively understand and tackle structural inequality and health inequalities, including racialised and gendered inequality. We need support, services, care and treatment that are person-centred, anti-racist, culturally and gender sensitive, age-appropriate, fully inclusive and in a range of formats.

1 The characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, belief and sex.



What success looks like



Promote

While awareness of mental health and wellbeing has improved, there is still work to do to increase understanding around both and tackle the stigma associated with mental health issues.

Promotion of mental health and wellbeing starts with all of us as individuals, families and communities. Promotion should ensure we understand it and what we can do to look after our own mental health and wellbeing and that of others in our communities.

To tackle these inequalities, we need a collective effort from local and national government, public and private bodies and organisations, the third sector, Health Boards, and our communities. All public bodies must comply with the public sector equality duty when they carry out their functions to help inform decisions.

We will work with partners and people with lived experience to shape and influence our approach to increasing awareness and understanding surrounding mental health and wellbeing and what that means.

We will also ensure clear points of access for advice, proactive access to self-care opportunities, and community supports and connections for those who experience mental illness and are at risk of self-harm or suicide.

Essential to this are the vital roles that local authorities, community planning partnerships, communities and third sector organisations (which include charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups) play in developing resilience, providing social infrastructure and supporting mental health and wellbeing nationally and in local communities.

We know that employers can play a key role in tackling mental health stigma by creating workplace cultures where open and honest discussion about mental health and wellbeing is supported and where discriminatory behaviour is challenged. We want to ensure that employers have the support they need to promote and support the conditions that enable individuals to experience good mental health at work. Supporting and promoting good mental health and wellbeing at work benefits both the individuals and employers.





Prevent

By prevention, we mean preventing mental health issues from occurring or intensifying and tackling underlying causes and inequalities wherever possible. Early identification of mental health and wellbeing issues and provision of early advice and support will continue to be an important part of our approach. This includes providing support, care and treatment for those in distress, and improving our response to people experiencing crisis, keeping them safe and preventing their situation from escalating further.

We will continue to develop ways of working to increase access to a range of early intervention initiatives and services in primary and community settings, recognising the substantial support needed and provided within GP settings. In doing so, we aim to prevent people from becoming so unwell that they require more intense interventions and treatments that may have a negative impact on their daily lives. We will also ensure provision of a range of support for self-management approaches, including digital options, to promote good mental health and wellbeing and sustain recovery.

We will work more closely with the third sector and support communities to recognise and respond to people's needs and to take a whole family approach to support. Investment in mental wellbeing will support new dedicated mental health supports and services, including raising

the profile and importance of peer support relationships in helping people with mental health and wellbeing challenges, particularly throughout recovery from mental ill health.

We know that there is a higher risk of unemployment amongst those with mental health issues, and that mental health issues can be a significant factor in the cause of economic inactivity for those with long-term health conditions. By focusing on prevention and early intervention approaches, individuals can be supported to sustain secure employment with less cost to employers through fewer days lost to sickness and absence.

Integral to early intervention will be recognising and targeting evidenced-based approaches for particular groups and communities who are at greater risk of poor mental health. This includes people with long-term physical health conditions, ensuring they are not further stigmatised.

We will also seek to improve links between different parts of the system to ensure people are connected directly to the advice and support they need, wherever they first seek help.





Provide

People who live with mental health conditions, as well as those who experience poor mental health at points throughout their life, should benefit from timely access to safe, effective and compassionate person-centred and whole-family approach to support, care and treatment. This will mean continuing to work closely with Health Boards and local partners to ensure waiting time standards are met and that services are responsive to the experiences of those who use them.

We are committed to providing high-quality mental health and wellbeing support and care. This means people can access the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Our whole system approach sets out the different kinds of support and care people might need to access at different points in their lives. This means responding to the different needs of children, young people and adults, as well as marginalised groups.

We will continue to improve and enhance mental health supports and services, giving consideration to suitable digital and new technology services (where evidenced and appropriate) and other non-digital formats, to ensure people receive quality care and treatment as close to home as possible that meets individual needs. Scottish Government will also continue the successful partnership work with Police Scotland, the Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS 24, Health Boards and others, including the third sector, to ensure those in crisis can access the best care as quickly as possible.

As with actions required under 'Promote' and 'Prevent', we know doing more of the same and providing investment in the same system will not deliver the change needed. For mental health services, setting clear outcomes and priorities for change will be necessary to drive improvement.

We will set out clear expectations for what mental health services will look like and how we will provide assurance of high-quality care. As part of this, we will continue to work with partners to improve the forensic mental health system.

Scottish Government will continue to develop Quality Standards and Specifications for mental health services, setting out clear expectations for what services will look like, recognising the need for local flexibility, whilst also providing assurance of high-quality care. These will be informed by the principles in this Strategy.

Scottish Government will work with partners to strengthen the scrutiny and assurance of the delivery of mental health services. The quality and safety of NHS mental health in-patient services are important in supporting positive outcomes.

Alongside this we will continue to develop accurate and reliable data with systems that are fit for purpose to report on progress towards improved outcomes. Whilst some environments are modern and enable the provision of high quality care, others need improvement. A national tool will be developed to assess and support improvement in the quality and safety of the mental health built environment.



A whole system approach to improving mental health and wellbeing

The model on the following page shows what we think an empowered, effective and accessible support system should look like.

As we were developing this Strategy, people told us that a whole person approach was important to them. We have defined a whole person approach in the context of mental health as:

“ when a whole person approach to mental health is proactively considered, embedded and applied in all policy and practice, planning and decisions, we will make the changes required to improve life circumstances. ”

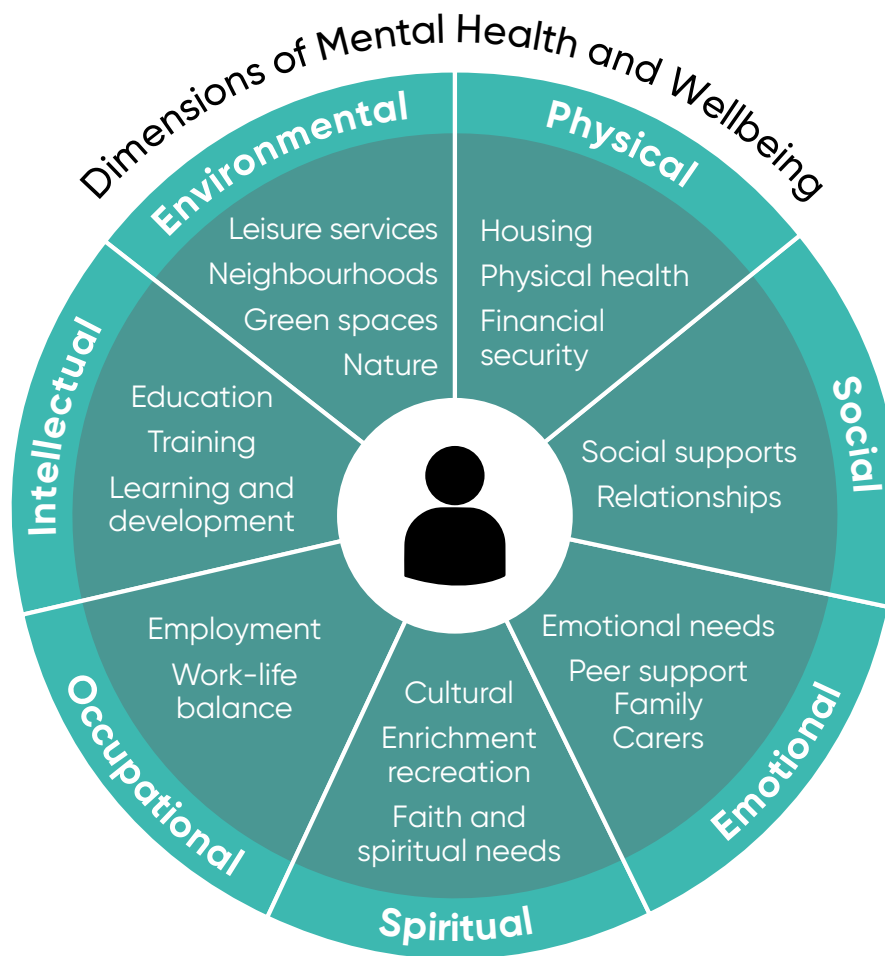
Our whole systems model outlines that we must continue focussing on prevention and early intervention. There is a key role for local support in the community.

Support, care and treatment need to be delivered in a way that is as local as possible and as specialist as necessary. This requires a system that is responsive to local and individual needs.

However, we know that some mental health conditions are long-term or lifelong, resulting in people needing ongoing support for the rest of their lives. This requires ongoing access to a range of supports and services.



Whole Systems Model



Support, Care and Treatment Pathway



- Self management
- Self-care
- Community supports
- Third sector
- Digital support
- Digital mental health and wellbeing supports
- Helplines
- e.g. Breathing Space
- Peer support

- Primary care, GPs
- General mental health care
- Helplines
- e.g. NHS 24
- Mental Health Hub
- Digital/online support and therapies

- Specialist secondary mental health care and treatment
- Community mental health team
- Older adults community mental health team
- CAMHS
- Psychological therapies teams
- Liaison/urgent care teams

- Highly specialist services
- Inpatient care
- Forensic teams
- Perinatal services
- Eating disorder services

Workforce

Our vision is that the current and future mental health and wellbeing workforce are valued and supported to provide effective, person-centred, trauma-informed, rights-based compassionate services and support.



Overarching workforce aim

Through our strategic approach to workforce planning, our aim is to achieve a mental health and wellbeing workforce which is diverse, skilled, supported and sustainable. The mental health and wellbeing workforce play a critical part in how we promote positive mental wellbeing, prevent poor mental health or further deterioration in

those with existing mental health conditions, and provide safe, effective, timely, compassionate and evidenced-based support, care and treatment where these are required.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Plan

We will publish a Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Action Plan setting out the immediate actions, timeframes and allocation of responsibilities for achieving the outcomes, all of which contribute to achieving our vision for the workforce to ensure that everyone experiences the best mental health and wellbeing possible.

Workforce Pillar	Overarching Aim
 <p>Plan</p>	<p>Whole person, evidence-based planning across the system to ensure the right workforce numbers, with the right skills, to provide the right support, at the right time.</p>
 <p>Attract</p>	<p>Mental health and wellbeing careers are attractive, with inclusive and diverse routes to recruitment, clear progression pathways and where all are respected, empowered and valued for their work.</p>
 <p>Train</p>	<p>The mental health and wellbeing workforce is skilled, trained and supported to work agilely and flexibly, embracing new technologies and are informed by evidence to support a whole person approach.</p>
 <p>Employ</p>	<p>Underpinned by Fair Work principles, sustainable and inclusive growth is created within the mental health and wellbeing workforce, in line with Scotland's population demographics and the demands on services.</p>
 <p>Nurture</p>	<p>The mental health and wellbeing workforce are valued, empowered and supported.</p>



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