**Fife Health
& Social Care
Partnership**

Supporting the people of Fife together

Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy
2026-2029

'Let's talk about mental health'

NHS
Fife

Supporting the people of Fife together

Fife
COUNCIL

Contents

Foreword

Imagine a Fife where mental health is embraced with understanding and compassion, and everyone—regardless of their life experiences and circumstances—has the opportunity to thrive. A place where we feel safe, connected to our communities, and have a sense of purpose. A place where we can talk openly about our mental health, where we all support each other and no one feels alone, where we know how to look after and nurture our mental wellbeing and where we can access the right support, care and treatment if we are struggling and need help.

Extensive consultation with almost one thousand people in Fife who use and deliver services contributed to shaping this three-year strategy. The engagement work led to the agreement of five shared priorities to achieve our vision of '**A Fife where every child, adult and community is valued and supported to achieve their best possible mental health and wellbeing**'. People told us that what mattered was a system that was collaborative, accessible, preventative, informed, person focused, outcomes focused and compassionate. These core values create a clear foundation to guide our actions.

This strategy builds on many examples of excellent partnership working in Fife, but we know that we must do more. We must go on making sure that our services work alongside people on their terms, in a place, time and manner that works for them. We must tackle the deep inequalities relating to mental health. We will work to strengthen our compassionate communities. We will develop public health approaches which benefit the whole population in Fife. Most importantly, our work will focus on creating hope, wellbeing and recovery.

This Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is for all-ages and builds on our previous Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-24. Many of our aspirations and objectives have not changed, but we are aware that the world we exist in has. This refreshed strategy seeks to join the dots and looks at how we can tackle together, head on, some of the greatest challenges we face as a Kingdom and ultimately improve the mental health and wellbeing of people living in Fife. Together, this is how we will improve mental health and wellbeing in Fife.

Lynne

Lynne Garvey

Director of Fife Health and Social Care Partnership

Chief Officer, Fife Integration Joint Board

Introduction

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Our Vision

A Fife where every child, adult, and community is valued and supported to achieve
their best possible mental health and wellbeing.
We will achieve this through an integrated, whole-system, person-centred approach that ensures
seamless access, with no wrong door, and a strong focus on prevention at the heart of all we do.

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What is mental health and wellbeing?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It is linked to our physical health and plays a key role in our life choices and outcomes. Good mental health is important at every stage of life, from early years, through childhood and adolescence, and into adulthood. Mental health can affect people in different ways at different times, for example influencing:

- how we think
- how we feel
- what we do
- how we respond to experiences
- our physical health and wellbeing
- how well we cope with daily life
- our enjoyment of life
- how we interact with others

This strategy draws from the definitions captured in Scotland's *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy*, published in June 2023. This is a link to the national strategy: **www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-wellbeing-strategy/documents/**.

Mental health is a part of our overall health, alongside our physical health. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It is what we experience every day, and, like physical health, it ebbs and flows daily. Good mental health means we can realise our full potential and feel safe and secure.

Mental wellbeing is how we feel and how well we are coping with everyday life. Having good mental wellbeing doesn't mean that you feel happy all of the time, that you are unaffected by your experiences, or that you don't have a mental health problem. Good mental wellbeing means that you feel well enough, you can cope with daily activities, and, at the moment, are positive about your life.

Mental illness includes a range of health conditions that affect our emotions, thinking and behaviour, and which substantially interfere with or limits our life. If left untreated, mental illnesses can significantly impact daily living, including our ability to work, care for family, and relate and interact with others. Mental illness is a term used to cover several conditions (e.g. depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia) with different symptoms and impacts for varying lengths of time for each person. Mental illnesses can range from mild, and/or temporary conditions through to lifelong illness.

Mental illness can make it harder for people to manage their basic needs and to care for themselves and others. Input from family members, carers and friends, as well as local community resources can play a key role in supporting someone's mental and physical wellbeing, improving their social connections, and empowering them to cope better with everyday life. Recognising the importance of positive community support, including shared experiences, and encouraging openness, empathy and acceptance can promote better mental health and wellbeing for everyone.
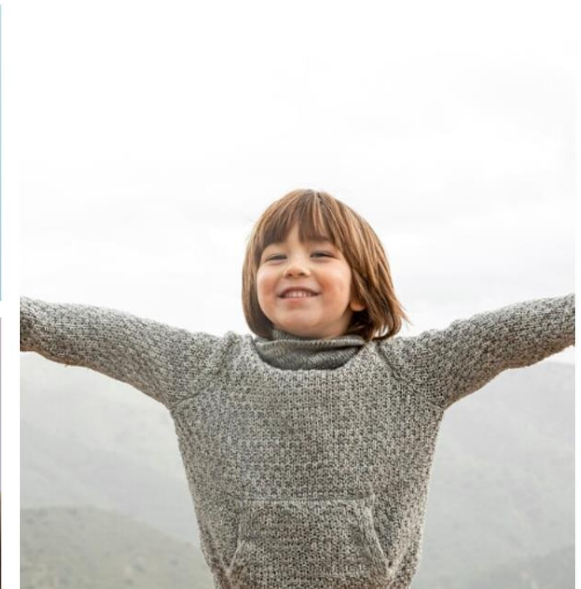
National Strategies

Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The national Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and supporting Delivery Plan were published in 2023; these publications set out the actions required to progress the strategy and establish a robust platform for longer-term change. The new national strategy acknowledges current challenges, including the significant impact of the recent coronavirus pandemic and cost-of-living crisis on the mental health and wellbeing of particular groups including younger adults, women, those living on low incomes and individuals with a pre-existing mental health condition.

Fife's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, along with the Fife Delivery Plan, set out how we will deliver these national priorities at a local level.

Dementia Strategy

Fife Health and Social Care Partnership has adopted the National Dementia Strategy for Scotland (Dementia in Scotland – Everyone's Story). Building on several years of globally recognised public policy on dementia, the national strategy sets out a positive shared vision for change over the next 10 years. We have developed a self-assessment tool to allow us to benchmark our delivery activity in Fife against the national delivery plan. This is also helping us to identify further local actions that are required specific to Fife.

Suicide Prevention

Scotland's Suicide Prevention 10-year strategy, 'Creating Hope Together', recognises the multitude of factors that determine suicide risk and identifies four priority areas. Delivery of the strategy is supported by three, three-year action plans. The 'Creating Hope Together Action Plan 2022-2025' is the current action plan with over 30 specific actions for consideration at national and/or local level. There is a requirement for all Health and Social Care Partnerships to develop and deliver a local version of the national 30-point action plan.

The Fife Suicide Prevention Action Plan 'Creating Hope for Fife' reflects Fife Health and Social Care Partnership's strategic objectives, and the approach outlined within Creating Hope Together, which is a whole society and whole government approach to suicide prevention.

Self Harm Strategy and Action Plan

The national Self Harm Strategy and Action Plan 'Supporting with Compassion' aims for anyone affected by self-harm, to receive compassionate recovery-focused support, without fear of stigma or discrimination. Fife's local Action Plan aligns with these national outcomes to reduce self-harm and promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all.

Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodivergence

Our approach to supporting learning/intellectual disabilities and autism in Scotland is aligned to the most recent (published March 2021) Scottish Government plan 'Towards Transformation'. This two-year plan sits alongside the existing 'Keys to Life Strategy' and the 'Scottish Strategy for Autism'. We are committed to improving outcomes for autistic people and people who have learning/intellectual disabilities, their families and their carers. Like many Health and Social Care Partnerships, we are awaiting the outcome(s) from the Scottish Government's Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill Consultation which will provide us with a national direction to continue to develop this area of work.

Further information about all of these national documents is available here:

- www.gov.scot/publications/mental-health-wellbeing-strategy/documents/
- www.gov.scot/publications/new-dementia-strategy-scotland-everyones-story/
- www.gov.scot/publications/creating-hope-together-scotlands-suicide-prevention-strategy-2022-2032/
- www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-self-harm-strategy-action-plan-2023-27/documents/
- www.gov.scot/publications/learning-intellectual-disability-autism-towards-transformation/documents/
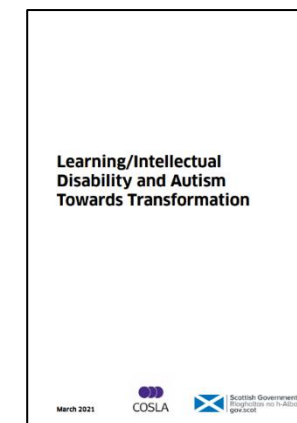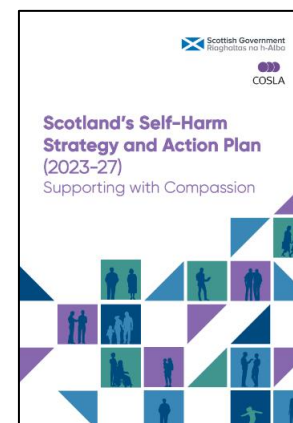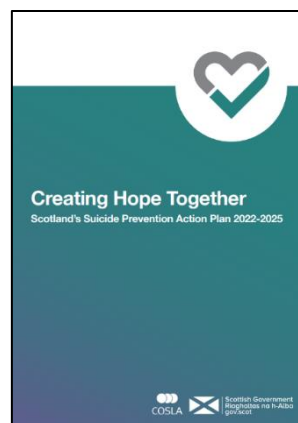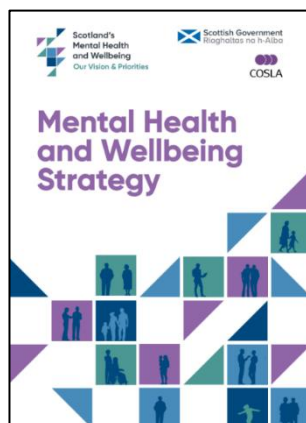
Fife's Strategic Vision

Fife Health and Social Care Partnership has a Strategic Plan (2023 to 2026) which sets out the vision and future direction of health and social care services across Fife. The Plan for making it happen in Fife includes five strategic priorities:

- Local - A Fife where we will enable people and communities to thrive.
- Sustainable - A Fife where we will ensure services are inclusive and viable.
- Wellbeing - A Fife where we will support early intervention and prevention.
- Outcomes - A Fife where we will promote dignity, equality and independence.
- Integration - A Fife where we will strengthen collaboration and encourage continuous improvement.

The Strategic Plan is supported by nine transformational strategies which describe the actions the Partnership will take to implement our overarching vision of enabling the people of Fife to live independent and healthier lives.

Fife's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026 to 2029 is one of the nine transformational strategies. In addition to enabling the people of Fife to achieve their best possible mental health and wellbeing; this strategy also supports the wider vision and priorities in the Partnership's Strategic Plan.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is linked to all of Fife's key strategic documents as part of a collective plan of action.
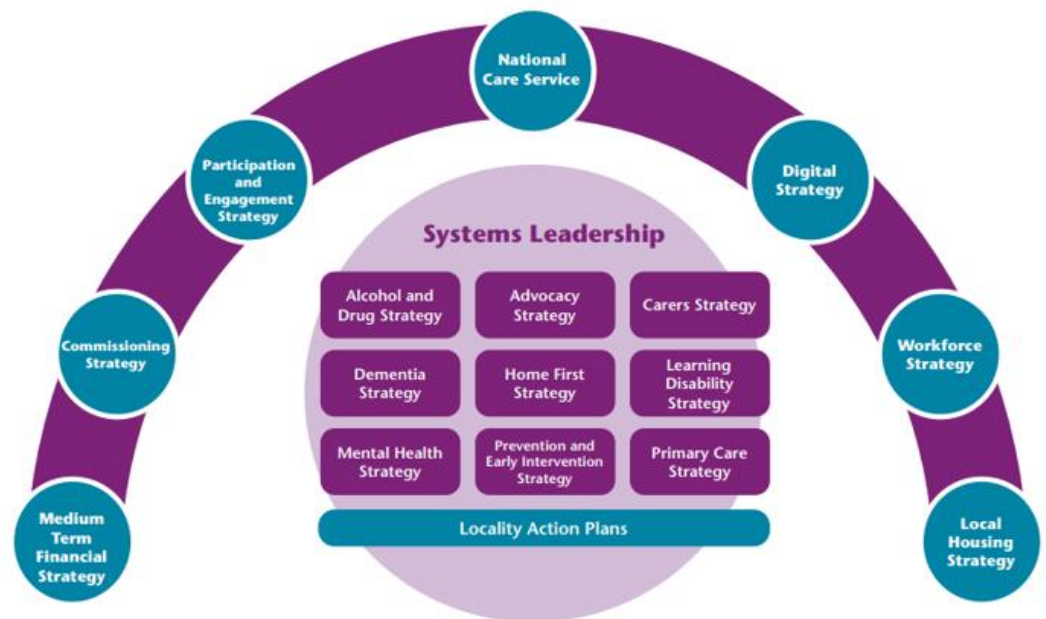
Fife Health and Social Care Partnership's supporting strategies

Fife's Key Strategic Documents
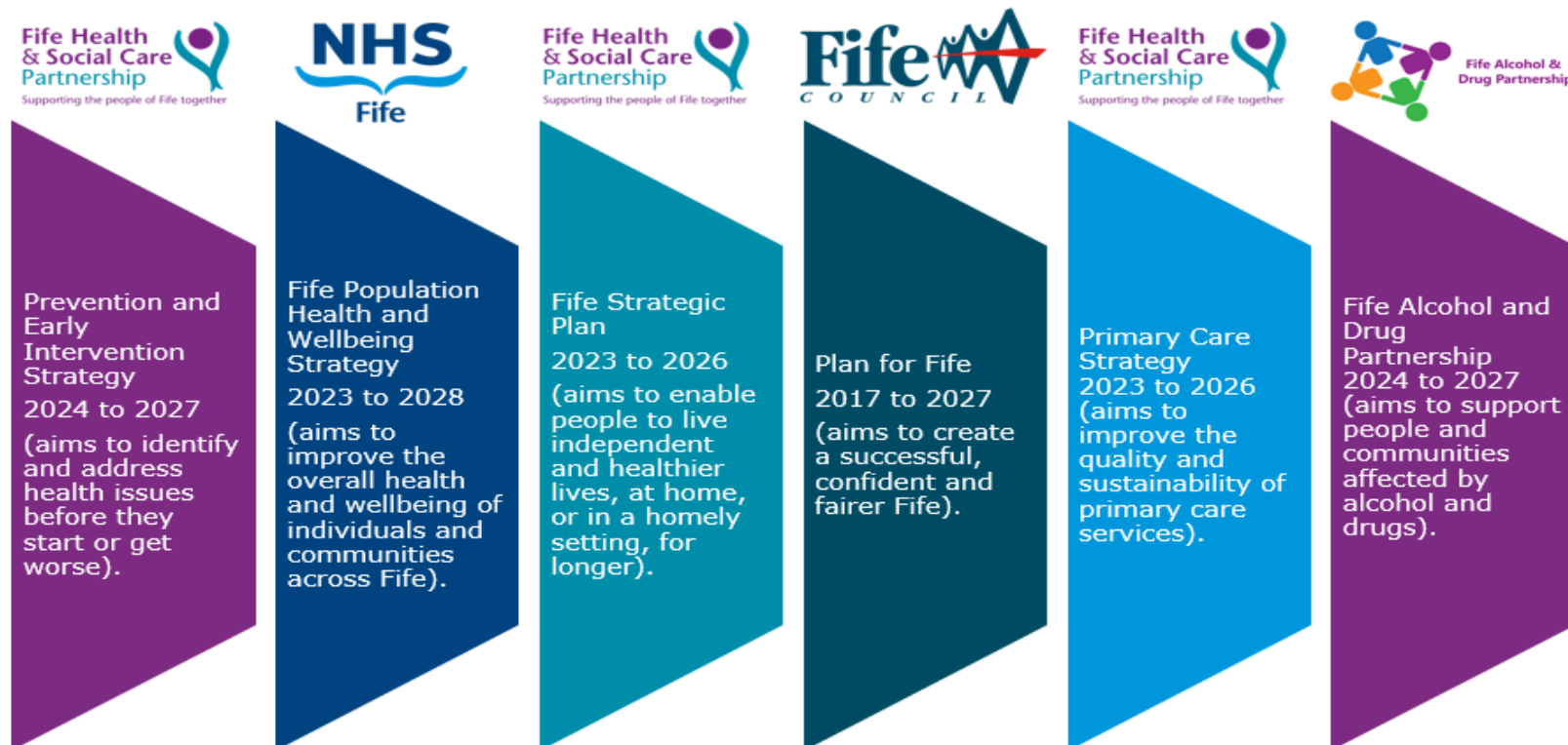
Fife's key strategic documents

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy also aligns with other key strategic documents including the Plan for Fife (2017 to 2027) and the NHS Fife Population Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023 to 2028). Further information on all of the Partnership's strategies and plans is available on our website: **www.fifehealthandsocialcare.org**

A Strategy for Everyone

Some mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression, can affect people of any age. Symptoms can last for a short time, they may come and go, be triggered by particular experiences and/or circumstances, or they can be lifelong. Mental wellbeing, and the ability to achieve our potential, affects all of us, throughout life

The vision and priorities in this Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy apply to every life stage although specialist services and support for those who need them may be provided in different ways, for example through our Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service, our Addiction Services, or the Dementia Post Diagnostic Support Service.

Significant health inequalities exist across Fife and many communities face additional and multiple disadvantage, including fewer employment opportunities, increased social and digital exclusion, increased poverty, and housing which is overcrowded and/or poorly maintained.
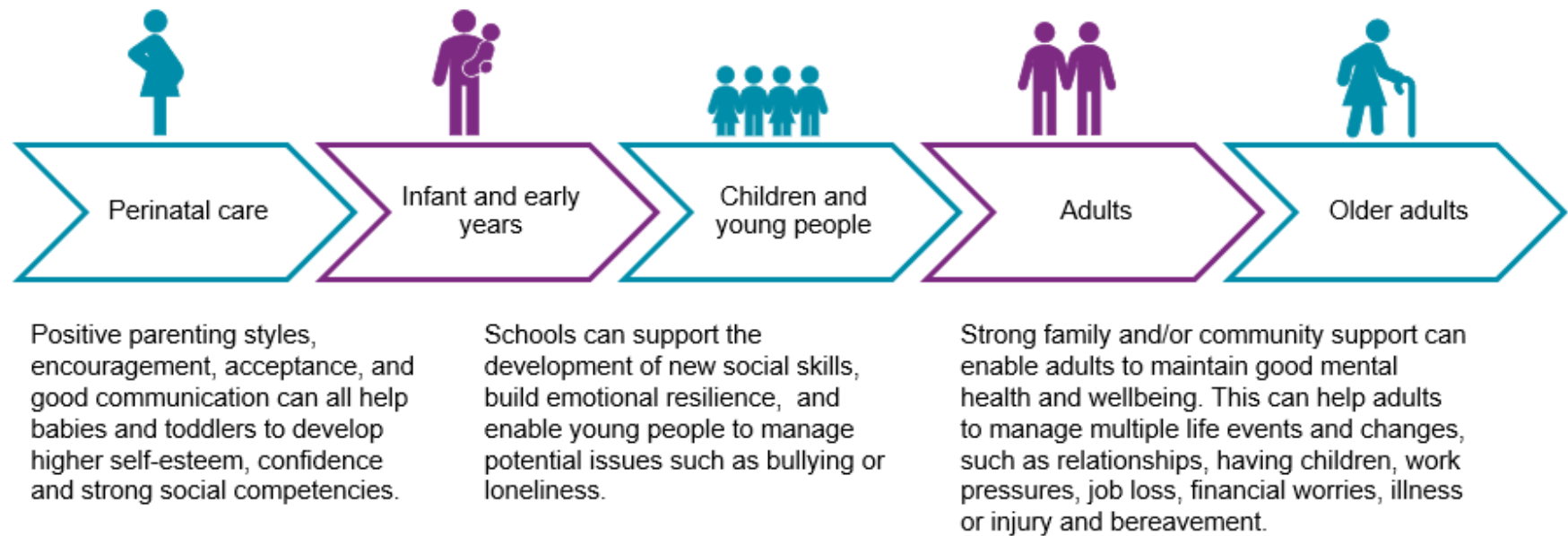
People's circumstances and needs, and therefore the services and support they require, can change over time. Our integrated framework for mental health services ensures that the right support is available, in the right place, at the right time, whenever anyone asks for help.

Multimorbidity (which means having more than one long-term health condition) can also have a significant impact on people's mental health and is linked to reduced wellbeing and health outcomes. Individuals with neurodevelopmental or neurodegenerative conditions and disorders are more likely to experience mental health problems and some of these conditions are linked to particular life stages. For example, autism (autism spectrum disorder) is a lifelong developmental disability that individuals are born with. Autism is not a mental health problem; however, people with autism can also experience mental health problems, and some autistic people do experience discrimination, loneliness or other negative factors that contribute to poor mental health.

In contrast, Alzheimer's Disease is a physical illness which damages a person's brain and over time this eventually causes dementia. Usually, Alzheimer's Disease affects adults and older adults, although it is possible for younger people to experience early-onset dementia. Individuals with dementia may also experience mental health problems such as anxiety, agitation, depression or psychosis.

This diagram highlights the types of support that may be relevant at different life stages.

Perinatal care → Infant and early years → Children and young people → Adults → Older adults

Positive parenting styles, encouragement, acceptance, and good communication can all help babies and toddlers to develop higher self-esteem, confidence and strong social competencies.

Schools can support the development of new social skills, build emotional resilience, and enable young people to manage potential issues such as bullying or loneliness.

Strong family and/or community support can enable adults to maintain good mental health and wellbeing. This can help adults to manage multiple life events and changes, such as relationships, having children, work pressures, job loss, financial worries, illness or injury and bereavement.

Key life stages and some of the supports that can help people's mental health and wellbeing.

Fife Children's Services Partnership Strategy, outlined in the Fife Children's Plan 2023 to 2026 (Fife Partnership, 2023) aims to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people, and their families. This work is firmly aligned with the principles of The Promise, GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child), and the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), ensuring that all actions are guided by a commitment to children's rights, wellbeing, and achieving the best possible future for every child in Fife through the Child Wellbeing Pathway (Fife Partnership, 2024).

The Plan sets out a multi-agency approach to ensure children, young people, and their families have equitable access to timely and appropriate mental health supports and services.

Through collaboration with education, health, and community partners, the Partnership are committed to implementing a 'No Wrong Door' approach, enhancing professional capacity with targeted training, and robust data analysis to inform and improve service delivery and outcomes. This strategic focus aligns with reducing stigma, promoting early intervention, and ensuring supports are accessible and responsive to the evolving needs of children and young people.

Integrated mental health and wellbeing system

To meet what everyone needs, all these areas need to be strong and to work well together

Self management

Community support

Primary and Community care

Secondary care mental health services

Specialist mental health services

Social connections
Online supports
Helplines

Link Workers
First contact services
NHS 24

Decision support
Reflective practice

Transition support
Discharge practice

Self awareness
Self care
Information
Family and relationships
Work
Basic needs met

Schools
Leisure pursuits
Community groups
Self help groups
Peer supports
Volunteering
Charities

General Practice
Mental health workers
Allied Health Professionals
Community Pharmacy
Health Visitors
Health Promotion
Psychologists
Psychological Therapists

Addiction Services
Liaison Psychiatry
Urgent Care
Psychology Services
Community Mental Health Teams
Children's Mental Health Services

Forensic Service
Specialised services
Mental Health Hospital Services
Tertiary services

Fife Mental Health Services and Support

This diagram highlights the range of mental health services and support that are available for people across Fife.

We Asked, You Said, We Will

During November 2023 to January 2024, we engaged with individuals, groups and communities across Fife to develop the vision and top five priorities for this strategy. This included lots of different opportunities and formats for people to get involved.

All of these groups were involved in the consultation process:

- Addictions Support Groups
- Adults with learning disabilities
- Bipolar Support Group
- Care Home residents
- College students and school pupils
- Dementia Support Groups
- Fife Psychology Service colleagues
- Mental health lived experience groups
- Unpaid carers
- An online survey which was open to everyone.

Working together we developed a draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and a supporting Delivery Plan. During November 2024 to February 2025, we asked people for their views on the Delivery Plan. We wanted to make sure that the actions that are planned will deliver the agreed vision and priorities. This consultation included lived experience groups, employees and members of the public. There was overwhelming support for the actions identified in the Delivery Plan.

Strategic Priorities

Improving mental health and wellbeing for people across Fife requires new ways of working. Individuals, families, communities and organisations must work together, building on the services and support that is already in place, sharing new ideas and solutions, and helping each other to do things differently. Everyone is involved, and everyone can make a positive difference!

Our Strategic Priorities

We asked communities and groups across Fife what was important to them, and they identified five key priorities.

These five strategic priorities provide the foundation for this Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. A description of each strategic priority is included below, along with the key actions we will take to deliver each of these five priorities

Detailed Delivery Plans will be developed each year, we will regularly review performance and publish annual reports and updates so that you can see the progress that together, we have achieved.

- Talking about mental health
- Prevention, early intervention and wellbeing
- Improved response to mental health distress and crisis
- Support, care and treatment that is easy to access and makes a difference
- Harnessing technology (using technology in helpful ways)

Strategic Priorities

Priorities	Deliverables	Outcomes	Strategic Focus				
Talking about mental health.	We will tackle stigma and discrimination related to mental health and help to create a Fife where we can talk openly about our mental health, without fear or judgement, and where we are supported to seek help when we need it.	People will feel comfortable talking about their mental health, will not feel alone, and will be able to access opportunities and inclusive services and supports when they need them.				Outcomes	Integration
Prevention, early intervention and wellbeing.	We will ensure all people in Fife, including those living with mental health conditions, have the resources they need locally to maintain and improve their own mental health and wellbeing.	People will feel part of mentally healthy, compassionate and supportive families, workplaces and communities.			Wellbeing		
Improved response to mental health distress and crisis.	We will ensure that people experiencing or at risk of mental health distress and crisis can access timely and compassionate support.	People's quality of life will improve through inclusive, timely access to appropriate high quality mental health information, support and services.	Local			Outcomes	
Support, care and treatment that is easy to access and makes a difference.	We will ensure that people experiencing mental health conditions can access timely, seamless and high-quality support, care and treatment which is a local as possible, as specialist as necessary, and which offers recovery and hope.	People will receive services and supports which are based on an understanding of their values, needs and experiences.	Local	Sustainable			
Harnessing technology (using technology in helpful ways).	We will harness technology in ways which create human connection, strengthen access to care, and build evidence to drive improvements and innovations.	People will have access to web-based supports that provide self-administered mental health screening, monitoring of symptoms, coaching on self-care, and digital therapies.			Wellbeing	Outcomes	Integration

Priority 1

Talking about mental health

We will tackle stigma and discrimination related to mental health and help to create a Fife where we can talk openly about our mental health, without fear or judgement, and where we are supported to seek help when we need it.

Mental health stigma is the negative attitude(s) or belief(s) based on an idea, misunderstanding or fear of mental health. Discrimination is when a person performs an action, whether intentional or unintentional, that creates barriers and inequality for people with mental health problems.

Many people with mental health problems say that stigma and discrimination have had a negative effect on their lives. This can include stopping someone from seeking help when they need it, or making someone's mental health problems feel worse.

We will continue to embed the Equality Act 2010 with respect to discrimination on grounds of mental health across all communities and in all areas of life. We will take every opportunity to combat stigma, which acts as a barrier to people seeking support with their mental health and wellbeing and promote social inclusion at every opportunity.

Outcome

People will feel more comfortable talking about their mental health, will not feel alone, and will be able to access opportunities and inclusive services and supports when they need them.

We will:

- 'Change the conversation' by making mental health and wellbeing a key part of discussion in areas like health, housing, education, culture, justice, and work. This can be done through special campaigns and programmes to improve understanding of mental health.
- Take focused action to understand and tackle the factors that cause mental health stigma, discrimination, and exclusion, especially for under-represented, minority, vulnerable, or disadvantaged groups.
- Identify the main factors that harm mental health and wellbeing and take public health steps to improve mental health discussions for everyone.
- Make sure that people with complex and overlapping needs can get support from all services by adjusting those services to fit their needs.
- Include people with lived experience. Create opportunities for learning, working together, new ideas, and research. This will help reduce stigma, raise awareness about mental health, and lead to ongoing improvements.

Priority 2

Prevention, early intervention and wellbeing

We will ensure all people in Fife, including those living with mental health conditions, have the resources they need locally to maintain and improve their own mental health and wellbeing.

Prevention and early intervention aims to stop mental health problems from developing, getting worse or coming back. This involves three different types of prevention.

- Protecting and promoting good mental health for all by giving people the knowledge and tools to nurture and look after their own mental health (primary prevention).
- Supporting people at higher risk of developing a mental health problem (secondary prevention).
- Helping people living with mental health problems to stay well (tertiary prevention).

Outcome

People will feel part of mentally healthy, compassionate and supportive families, workplaces and communities.

We will:

- Make mental health services and supports easier to access by improving community-based mental health services with lessons learned from previous projects that involved peoples' input.
- Act early to build resilience and focus on helping people build strong coping skills and protect their mental health at all ages and in different settings.
- Help people meet their basic needs and support people with the basics for good mental health, support them to take control of their mental health, and help them find their way through the mental health system when needed.
- Build stronger, healthier communities by using local resources and planning services that fit the needs of the community. We will fight social isolation and help vulnerable people connect with others and build strong support networks.
- Promote and encourage referrals to community-based mental health services like The Well and Link Life Fife and continue to work with Primary Care Teams to promote these services.

Case Study – Mental Health Officers (MHOs)

When Mrs B was admitted to hospital in February 2024 her allocated Social Worker updated Mrs B's social work needs assessment and identified that Mrs B would require additional waking night care. The Social Worker also contacted the Partnership's Mental Health Officer (MHO) Team to advise that a welfare guardianship application was required for Mrs B.

Due to Mrs B's potential 51x status (where a person's discharge from hospital is delayed due to incapacity to make safe decisions) a Mental Health Officer (MHO) was immediately allocated to her case. Medical reports were undertaken within the week and sent to the MHO. In cases other than potential 51x cases, doctors are legally allowed 28 days to complete their report. In this case the report was completed and submitted to legal services in March 2024 and then lodged in court with a request for interim (temporary) residence and care powers.

From Mrs B's admission to hospital, the process of assessment and completion of the guardianship process was completed within six weeks. Had this been a standard case, the process could have taken a minimum of two months for a local authority case, and four months for a private case, before it was ready for lodging in court. Once the case is submitted to court it can then take between one and twelve weeks for powers to be granted, depending on how busy the court is.

By working closely together, Social Workers, legal representatives, MHOs and doctors can make good decisions for adult patients much faster than before. This approach is reducing long delays in hospital, which can badly impact the mental and physical health of patients who are medically ready to leave. Fife Health and Social Care Partnership now have weekly 51x meetings to address any problems that come up, including any issues that might cause unnecessary delays.

Community Mental Health Integrated Care Model

Our Community Mental Health Integrated Care Model shifts the focus from hospital-based treatment to person centred, accessible, and non-judgmental services delivered within the community, to support people's independence, community connections, and overall wellbeing. This model aims to integrate mental health care with other community services, promoting collaboration with local organisations, people with lived experience, along with other services such as primary care, the voluntary sector, social work and social care, particularly for individuals with severe mental health problems and those with co-existing physical health issues.

Mental Health Services in Fife are undertaking a programme of transformational change to address increasing demand and complexity of problems faced by people with mental ill-health. To address this increasing demand, Fife Health and Social Care Partnership is working to ensure more ongoing care and support is available in the community. We are reinvesting in the development of multi-disciplinary locality Community Mental Health Teams and our Urgent/Unscheduled Care and Assessment Team (UCAT) to ensure they are responsive, therapeutic and trauma informed. In addition, we are continuing to explore preventative housing support services for a wide range of people, including people with mental ill-health to ensure that they can live at home with just the right amount of care and support to maximise their quality of life and independent living skills.

Emergency Mental Health Pathways

Demand for emergency mental health support is significant with patients waiting long periods of time in environments that are not therapeutic. To address this, the Emergency Mental Health Workstream will focus on actions that will provide intelligence and appropriate interventions to refine and improve patient experience. Our actions for this workstream will include:

- Environmental reviews of all Emergency Department or UCAT settings (ED/UCAT).
  We will review the spaces within both the ED and used by UCAT to ensure they are supervised, calming spaces designed to provide support, protection, and an opportunity for mental health needs to be assessed. We will also ensure that there is a designated place of safety as near to the ED as possible which is a safe environment for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis while they are assessed by mental health professionals.

- Deep dives for all ED/UCAT – a review of the pathway with ED/UCAT staff.
  UCAT and the ED Team will work more closely to strengthen their collaboration and review and develop their working practices to support safe, effective and timely care and treatment for people presenting with complex mental health issues and co morbidities.

- Policy and guidance refresh and development.
  This will be undertaken as part of a clinical service review to improve access and quality of care for individuals experiencing mental health crises. Key developments will include the integration of mental health crisis lines with NHS 24's Mental Health Hub (accessed via 111), the establishment of clinical standards for response times in urgent and emergency mental health care, and a focus on preventing mental health crises and supporting individuals in their communities.

- Working with partners to develop a contemporary Psychiatric Emergency Plan.
  We will work with police, health, social work, and other relevant partners to establish clear procedures for responding to psychiatric emergencies, aiming to minimize distress and ensure safe, person-centred care. This plan will outline roles and responsibilities, identify designated places of safety, and focus on preventing escalation to detention where possible by ensuring appropriate support.

- Working with our partners, to develop alternatives to ED/UCAT attendance.
  We will take a multi-faceted approach that utilizes partnerships and innovative solutions to ensure people receive the most appropriate care outside of the emergency department. We will focus on understanding the reasons for frequent attendance, providing community-based support, and optimizing urgent care pathways through various initiatives.

  We will develop alternatives to emergency mental health care i.e. UCAT, again through collaborative efforts between healthcare providers, community organizations, and individuals with lived experience, aiming to establish more proactive and preventative support systems. Our initiatives will focus on expanding access to timely and appropriate care, improving continuity of support, and fostering community-based solutions to reduce reliance on crisis services.

The key principles of our Community Mental Health Integrated Care Model include:

This approach ensures that care is person centred and focussed on recovery; individuals are empowered to make choices about their care and to participate in decision making processes. Benefits include:

- Integrated care can lead to better management of chronic conditions, reduced hospital readmissions, and improved overall health status.
- Individuals often report higher satisfaction with their care when services are well-integrated and meet their individual needs.
- Integrated models can improve access to a wider range of services, particularly for vulnerable populations, by breaking down barriers between different care settings.
- Coordinated care can minimize duplication of services and reduce unnecessary costs associated with fragmented care.

Priority 3
Improved response to mental health distress and crisis

We will ensure that people experiencing or at risk of mental health distress and crisis can access timely and compassionate support.

Emotional or mental distress is when an individual is experiencing persistent difficulties with their thoughts, feelings, and reactions, and this is interfering with their ability to cope with day-to-day living. This is different from the day-to-day variation in how we feel, or the emotional pain over life events such as relationship break ups or bereavements, and 'normal' stresses ('the ups and downs of life') that we all experience.

There are many possible causes for mental health distress, and the duration and degree of distress can vary for different people, and for the same person at different times in their life. Sometimes the distress that is experienced reaches a level that can be described as mental illness or disorder.

A mental health crisis is when a person feels at breaking point and needs urgent help. They might be feeling extremely anxious and having panic attacks or flashbacks, feeling suicidal or self-harming, having an episode of hypomania or psychosis. They might be dealing with bereavement, addiction, abuse, money problems, relationship breakdown, workplace or exam stress, or housing problems. They might be managing a mental health diagnosis or long-term health condition. Or might not know why they feel at breaking point.

Outcome

People's quality of life will improve through inclusive, timely access to appropriate high quality mental health information, support and services.

We will:

- Focus on those who are at higher risk of mental distress or crisis and would benefit from early intervention and prevention.
- Work to prevent suicides, reduce self-harm, and reduce the harm caused by substance misuse. This will be done by creating local action plans based on the Scottish Government's goals of 'Creating Hope Together' and 'Supporting with Compassion'.
- Improve the 'Urgent/Unscheduled Care and Assessment Team' service to make it easier for people to get help when they need it. This means providing urgent care closer to home and making the experience better for everyone.
- Create clear pathways for access to crisis support in partnership with our local partner organisations. Provide people who often need mental health support with a full, caring network of help to make sure they get the care they need.

Case Study – Mental Health Response Car, Levenmouth

Following concerns about the number of mental health related calls being received by Police Scotland in the Levenmouth area a multi-agency working group was established to identify and progress a solution. The working group were keen to explore public health approaches that would provide 'the right care at the right time to the right people' whilst making the best use of local resources including health professionals, police officers and other emergency responders.

The Mental Health Response Car initiative was funded by the Levenmouth Area Committee for a twelve-month period starting in June 2024. Initially operating every weekend within the Levenmouth area, the service was extended to include Kirkcaldy during the final five months of the project. Emergency services directed the car to all mental health-related calls, ensuring individuals received the right care, at the right time, delivered by the right professionals.

Feedback from some of the police officers involved in the project:

'When the car is available it is fantastic and really speeds up the process….'

'Particularly useful when intervening with regular callers… the triage car is able to attend… the staff take responsibility and respond promptly….and we get no further calls from the person…'

'…a great resource and reduces the time officers spend at mental health calls….'

'Content in the knowledge that the needs of the public are being met in the most appropriate and caring manner….'

'…. we would like to see this all the time….'

Case Study – Mental Health Response Car, Levenmouth

The Mental Health Response Car responded to 338 calls during the project. This was an average of seven calls each weekend - although this increased to between twelve and fifteen calls each weekend in January and February. Most of the calls (77%) related to mental health and seventy-eight of the calls were 'immediate life threatening'.

Less than 17% of the individuals who received help from the Mental Health Response Car needed to be taken to hospital afterwards.

Feedback from some of the people who have received help and support:

'Was very happy with the nurse… found the service helpful'

'Excellent service, very helpful, a great asset to have, felt respected and understood by the NHS staff and found them really, really helpful'

Priority 4

Support, care and treatment that is easy to access and makes a difference

We will ensure that people experiencing mental health conditions can access timely, seamless and high-quality support, care and treatment which is a local as possible, as specialist as necessary, and which offers recovery and hope.

We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health. Like physical health, some people will experience mental health challenges which will require specialist support either on a short-term basis or lifelong.

Secondary mental health care includes services for people with long-term or complex mental health issues, such as hospitals, some psychiatry and psychology services, community mental health services, and urgent/unscheduled care.

Carers and families of individuals who are waiting to access secondary mental health services may also need additional support. This can include information and advice on their right to access carers support, how to look after their own wellbeing, and what they can do to help support the person they care for while they wait for a service.

Outcome

People will receive services and supports which are based on an understanding of their values, needs and experiences.

We will:

- Create clear and easy-to-follow care pathways that connect mental health, social care, and physical health, making it simpler for people to get the support they need.
- Use a 'no wrong door' approach, meaning no one will be turned away or have their referral rejected. People will always be guided to the right help.
- Create a system that offers round-the-clock support for people of all ages, making sure no one misses out on help because of service hours or gaps between services.
- Promote working together to provide better services. Help professionals work across different areas, organise and plan care based on what people need, in local communities and places.
- Make sure we have a strong, well-supported workforce that can give the best care and advice to help people recover.
- Rationalise our mental health estate and create an environment which is welcoming and safe, making it pleasant to stay in for care and treatment, as well as for employees to work in.

Estate Transformation

The existing mental health inpatient estate is currently arranged sub-optimally on four sites across Fife in Dunfermline (Queen Margaret Hospital and Lynebank Hospital), Kirkcaldy (Whyteman's Brae) and Cupar (Stratheden Hospital). This often makes it difficult to staff our services efficiently and resiliently and access for patients and family can also be problematic. Whilst we have some newer facilities, most of the accommodation is in an inadequate condition requiring investment to return it an acceptable standard for our patients and staff.

Recognising these needs an engagement and consultation exercise was completed in 2023. The preferred option through this exercise was to establish inpatient facilities on a single site whilst re-designing community services to create a hub and spoke model of care where patients could be cared for close to where they live whilst having access to centralised inpatient services if this became necessary for their care. Whist this vision remains, it requires to be delivered incrementally in a phased manner given ongoing funding constraints.

Phase 1 – improve condition and safety.

Phase 2 – reduce the number of inpatient sites incrementally.

Each phase will allow us the opportunity to review the use and function of our bed base to ensure that we have the correct number of beds, in the right location, for each care group. Our overall aims are to ensure timely access to inpatient beds, reduced out-of-area placements and reduced delays in transfers of care

The Scottish Government will provide funding over the next three years to support our Mental Health Estate Project. This phased programme of work will be delivered in a manageable way over a three-year period and will help improve patient experience, support staff wellbeing, and enable more integrated models of care.

The Mental Health Estate Project will enable us to transform our mental health services through a modern, person-centred approach ensuring that care and support is delivered in safe, therapeutic, and recovery-focused environment. We will be able to provide high-quality, accessible mental health care that meets the needs of our communities now and in the future.

Queen Margaret Hospital, Dunfermline

Priority 5

Harnessing technology (using technology in helpful ways)

We will use technology to bring people closer together, make it easier for everyone to get the care and advice that they need when they need it, and support improvements and innovations that improve mental health and wellbeing

Digital inclusion means having the skills to use digital devices (such as computers, smart phones, and the internet), access to the internet (through broadband, Wi-Fi, mobile phones) and services which are designed to meet the needs of all users.

Increased use of digital tools, such as video calls, booking online appointments, or accessing information through mobile phone applications can build self-reliance and support improved mental health. Digital tools can also increase access to help, e.g. for people who struggle to attend face-to-face appointments due to transport difficulties or caring commitments.

Digital therapies are provided online or through mobile applications and can support individuals to prevent, manage or treat a wide range of mental health conditions.

Outcome

People will have access to web-based supports that provide self-administered mental health screening, monitoring of symptoms, coaching on self-care, and digital therapies.

We will:

- Offer more types of online mental health therapy to help people build their strength and mental wellbeing.
- Make sure everyone can access services, whether they use digital tools or need other options.
- Make our digital systems work better together to provide care that focuses on the whole person.
- Support new digital tools that help people access therapy, learn about mental health, and connect with others online.
- Use data and evidence to make changes that help create a fair and effective mental health system.
- Explore Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, including chatbots and virtual assistants, to provide immediate support, triage, and guidance, helping bridge potential gaps in service availability.
- Utilise AI enabled apps for personalised coaching, symptom tracking, and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) based interventions to help empower individuals to manage their mental health proactively.

Case Study – Supporting Access to Digital Psychological Therapies.

The NHS Fife Digital Therapies Team was established in 2024 to provide clinical leadership and support to implement digital psychological therapies. Provided through online web pages or apps, digital psychological therapies provide rapid access to evidence-based treatments for common mental health problems that can have lengthy waiting times. One key aim of the team is to ensure that everyone in Fife has the opportunity to access and benefit from digital therapies through service design advice, implementation support and innovation.

Recognising that digital exclusion (people not having the appropriate devices, connectivity, skills or confidence) was a barrier to some people accessing and benefitting from digital therapies, the Digital Therapies Team collaborated with Link Living to apply for an £80,000 grant through the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations' Connecting to Care Fund. This allowed us to pilot a new service called 'Linked Up', which recruited two peer support workers to provide digital inclusion support to people referred for digital therapies by mental health professionals. The peer workers met service users to discuss their needs and where required provided digital devices, enabled internet connectivity, and taught skills and built confidence enable people to access a range of digital therapies.

Service User M's experience:

M was referred to 'Linked Up' after experiencing difficulty accessing in-person psychological therapy following a hospital admission with complex physical health issues. M's deteriorating eyesight and lack of appropriate equipment meant that they could no longer access online services effectively, and had low confidence in using digital technology. Without support, M would have been unable to access psychological therapy and have continued to rely on their partner who was facing heightened stress as a carer.

Services were also struggling to support M as home visits were not feasible, and clinicians were unable to provide technical support to facilitate the use of remote therapy. After being referred by their clinician, M met with one of the Digital Inclusion Peer Support Workers to develop personal and clinical goals for using digital technology. M and their partner were provided with equipment and shown how to use accessibility features, then given personally tailored support to access psychological therapy via the NearMe system. NearMe is a secure system that enables patients to have video appointments in their own home through their computer or smart device. M and their partner also learned to use digital technology to access benefits and apply for a disability badge for their vehicle. Other helpful online services were bookmarked for later use.

Had this support not been available, M may not have been able to access therapy, or this would have required costly home visits which would have reduced the psychologist's capacity to see other patients. At the end of the support, M stated that they were 'feeling a lot more confident with the computer' and 'it's helpful to have appointments at home and to be shown how to do this'. Their partner also reported significantly reduced carer stress due to M's increased independence.

Clinical staff who referred to the service also had a number of reflections on the project:

'Many of my patients are house/bed bound following their long-term physical health conditions and are unable to come to sessions. This significantly increased accessibility for my patients, increased their confidence with them being able to engage in therapy. I had very positive reports.' - Clinician

'It would be fantastic if this became part of our standard offerings. It would improve choice and control for those receiving the care. Teaching these skills would also benefit clients more widely as hopefully the skills learned will generalise across all areas of their lives beyond digital therapy'. – Clinician

Learning from the project is now being used within Fife to plan for a longer-term service, and to advise the Scottish Government on the models of digital inclusion support necessary to ensure digital therapies remain an accessible choice for as many as possible.

Delivering our Vision

Our vision is '**A Fife where every child, adult and community is valued and supported to achieve their best possible mental health and wellbeing**'. We will achieve this through the successful implementation of this strategy, the supporting delivery plans, and related workstreams.

Some of the improvements and innovations we have planned sit within the Partnership's Mental Health Service Redesign Programme. Other activities will be delivered through connected strategies and their delivery plans. For example, the Partnership's Digital Strategy (2024 to 2027) promotes digital inclusion, supporting all individuals who choose to access internet and digital technologies, including those with mental health conditions. The Partnership's Carers Strategy (2023 to 2026) provides increased support for unpaid carers, including those who may need mental health support, and/or those who are caring for individuals that are receiving, or waiting for, mental health services.

There are also Fife wide workstreams, such as the development of the Partnership's new website, which can support better mental health and wellbeing for people across Fife. Targeted interventions, such as the Levenmouth Mental Health Response Car, can also deliver benefits and improve outcomes for specific communities.

All of these activities and improvements support the vision of Fife's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the delivery of its objectives, and improved outcomes for the people of Fife.

In addition, as part of an integrated framework of supporting strategies and delivery plans, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026 to 2029 provides an essential contribution to the implementation of the Partnership's overarching strategic priorities.

Performance Reporting

Public Health Scotland are currently reviewing their Quality Indicator Profile for mental health. This will complement the Scottish Government's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Core Mental Health Standards. The mental health indicators are currently in development nationally and are informed by the Core Standards Self-Assessment.

Fife Health and Social Care Partnership have developed a new Performance Framework, and a Planning and Performance Board has been established to monitor performance, and ensure that any identified risks, or significant changes, are considered and responded to timeously by the Partnership's Strategic Planning Group and Fife Integration Joint Board.

The Partnership's Mental Health Service Redesign Programme has oversight of these workstreams that support the implementation of this Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy:

- Clinical Services Review and Redesign
- Mental Health Estate
- Mental Health and Wellbeing in Primary Care and Community Settings

Further details on the activities planned, or already underway, for these workstreams, along with all of the actions that we plan to deliver and report on are included in the Partnership's Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan.

Conclusion

While there are many great examples in Fife of our work to respond to various mental health and wellbeing issues, we know we can do more. We know that mental health problems affect certain groups of people more than others. Providing access to support and appropriate treatment that meets the needs of people is important. Given the centrality of mental health and wellbeing to everything, this strategy is purposefully ambitious, not just in setting out what we need to do but also in how we need to do it.

The challenge is to ask how we can bring all our expertise, knowledge, resources and relationships together to improve the mental wellbeing of the people of Fife and respond to mental health issues in a flexible, person-centred way designed around people's needs.

No single agency, body or organisation can solve the mental health and wellbeing challenges we face as a community. This strategy is a 'system-wide' strategy, recognising that mental health is influenced by various issues from formal health services to social and economic conditions, to community, individual and family circumstances. Mental health and wellbeing must span and balance the medical and social models without subscribing to one or the other.

Kingdom of Fife

It also recognises the value of statutory, formal and informal support. The development of the Health and Social Care Partnership provides us with an opportunity to take a very different approach to responding to mental ill health as part of a whole system and whole society approach. We know that to rise to the challenges and pressures on the health system, we will need to significantly change how we operate.

We want to use this refreshed strategy to unite the different approaches to improving mental health in Fife. Some solutions will include better provision of services for those who have distinct mental ill health. Still, some solutions can be broader, involving all working closer and harmoniously with partners in building community wellbeing through housing, education, lifestyle and cultural bases. It is not just about sharing resources. It is about sharing ideology, sharing outcomes and sharing aspirations to become a mentally healthy Kingdom where every child, adult and place matters.

Sources of Support

Some of the content in this strategy may have had an emotional impact on you.

Support is always available, and some local resources are below.

- NHS inform **www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing**
Telephone: 0800 22 44 88 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).
- Fife Health and Social Care Partnership **www.fifehealthandsocialcare.org/services/all-services**
- Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH) **www.samh.org.uk**
Telephone: 0141 530 1000 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).
- Breathing Space **www.breathingspace.scot**
Telephone: 0800 83 85 87 (Monday to Thursday 6pm to 2am, Friday 6pm to Monday 6am).
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) **www.nhsfife.org/services/all-services/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-service-camhs/**
- Childline **www.childline.org.uk**
Telephone: 0800 1111 (Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- Samaritans **www.samaritans.org/scotland**
Telephone: 116 123
- Access Therapies Fife **www.accesstherapiesfife.scot.nhs.uk**
Telephone: 01383 565427
- Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland **www.mwcscot.org.uk**
Telephone: 0800 389 6809 (Monday to Friday 9am to 12pm, and then from 1pm to 4pm)).
- The Wells **www.fifehealthandsocialcare.org/your-community/the-well/**
Telephone: 03451 551500 (Wednesday to Friday 10am to 12pm and Monday to Thursday 1pm to 3pm)
- NHS 24 Mental Health Hub **https://www.nhs24.scot/check-your-symptoms/get-help-with-your-mental-health/**
Telephone: 111

Appendix

Glossary

Primary services

Primary care services are often the first point of contact for people seeking mental health support. This can include General Practitioners (GP's) and community pharmacies.

Secondary services

Secondary care services offer specialised support for more complex mental health issues, for example addiction services and psychological therapies.

Tertiary services

Tertiary care is highly specialised treatment, for example forensic mental health services and mental health hospital services.

Psychological therapies

Psychological therapies are treatments that help people understand and overcome difficult emotions and behaviours. They are based on a shared understanding between an individual and therapist of the causes of the difficulties and how to manage them effectively.

Liaison psychiatry

Liaison psychiatry is the area that connects mental health care with other medical care. It involves mental health professionals like psychiatrists working with other medical professionals to provide care to patients in medical settings like hospitals.

Forensic services

Forensic mental health services provide assessment, treatment and rehabilitation for individuals who are currently undergoing, or have undergone, legal or court proceedings.

Tangible resources

Tangible resources are supplies or things that can be touched or felt and used, for example buildings, furniture and equipment.

Intangible resources

Intangible resources are things that have value, but you cannot physically touch them, for example reputation, skills, goodwill and culture.

Harnessing technology

Harnessing technology means using technology in helpful ways. This includes using machines, computers, and tools to help people with their mental health.

Opioid overdose

Opioids are drugs that can be addictive. An overdose is when someone takes too many drugs. This can affect their breathing or cause other physical and psychological harm. Sometimes opioid overdose can lead to death.

Key legislation

- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- Armed Forces Covenant Duty 2022
- Equality Act 2010
- Fairer Scotland Duty 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 as amended by the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 2015
- Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014
- National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978
- Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

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