

<h1>NHS Highland</h1>	
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<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>28 January 2025</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Health and Wellbeing Strategy</b>
<b>Responsible Executive/Non-Executive:</b>	<b>Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture</b>
<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Gaye Boyd, Deputy Director of People</b>

1 Purpose

**This is presented to the Board for:**

- Assurance

**This report relates to a:**

- NHS Board Strategy or Direction

**This report will align to the following NHS Scotland quality ambition(s):**

Safe, Effective and Person Centred

**This report relates to the following Strategic Outcome(s)**

Start Well		Thrive Well		Stay Well		Anchor Well	
Grow Well		Listen Well	x	Nurture Well	x	Plan Well	x
Care Well		Live Well		Respond Well		Treat Well	
Journey Well		Age Well		End Well		Value Well	
Perform well		Progress well					

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy is now at a final stage (Appendix 1) following an organisational wide consultation and feedback received and considered from

various meetings and Committees it was presented to. It is presented to the NHS Highland Board for approval prior to launch.

2.2 Background

Over the period 25<sup>th</sup> April to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2024 the draft strategy was out for consultation to our wider workforce to obtain feedback on the content and to identify anything critical that may have been omitted.

Prior to this the Strategy document had been considered at the Area Partnership Forum (APF), Staff Governance Committee, Local Partnership Forums, Senior Leadership Teams, NHH Health and Wellbeing group and Argyll & Bute Culture and Wellbeing Group and feedback was gathered to help shape it further. The final version has been presented to APF in October and Staff Governance Committee in November 2024.

2.3 Assessment

In the main, the Strategy was received very positively, acknowledging that this is a much-needed step forward, capturing the good work and resources into a detailed strategy for NHS Highland. The strategy establishes the foundations and builds a framework to develop over the duration of its tenure.

There were 33 anonymous survey responses along with the verbal feedback given at the meetings detailed above. All responses were considered for the final strategy document and the associated action plans.

2.4 Proposed level of Assurance

This report proposes the following level of assurance:

Substantial	<div><div>x</div></div>	Moderate	<div><div></div></div>
Limited	<div><div></div></div>	None	<div><div></div></div>

Comment on the level of assurance

The assurance is substantial as full consultation has been completed and feedback considered in final document.

3 Impact Analysis

3.1 Quality/ Patient Care

There is strong evidence linking patient safety, patient experience and the quality of care with the safety, health and wellbeing of the workforce. (NHS employer’s workplace health and safety standards)

**3.2 Workforce**

In line with the Together we Care Strategy, NHS Highland seeks to be a great place to work, recognising employees as the most valuable asset and supporting their health and wellbeing, both in and outside the workplace.

**3.3 Financial**

The resource to support the health and wellbeing working group are from existing teams. Any activities that require funding will be sought through the existing processes and there may be support from endowments as appropriate. This will be explored as the activities and priorities are identified.

**3.4 Risk Assessment/Management**

To nurture the workforce is a priority of the Together we Care Strategy. Failure to support this commitment with appropriate focused action risks a detrimental impact on absence levels, retention, productivity, and employee engagement and overall health and wellbeing of our workforce

**3.5 Data Protection**

No personally identifiable information was collected.

**3.6 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities**

The strategy is currently being impact assessed by the Health and Wellbeing group and this EIA will also include all feedback from the consultation to ensure that potential impacts and mitigations have been considered.

**3.7 Other impacts**

None

**3.8 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation**

Hearing from and communicating with the workforce is a crucial aspect for the development of the strategy and the work of the working group and will be fundamental to the success of wellbeing activity.

**3.9 Route to the Meeting**

The draft strategy was previously considered by the following groups as part of its development and has again been circulated with the consultation update.

- Health and Wellbeing Group, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024
- People and Culture Portfolio Board, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024
- APF, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2024
- Staff Governance Committee, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024
- Health and Wellbeing Group, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024

- Portfolio Board, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024
- APF, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2024
- Staff Governance Committee, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024

**4 Recommendation**

- **Assurance** – assurance is provided that a full consultation has been undertaken and that the gathered feedback has been considered and included where appropriate in the final Strategy. The Board are asked to approve this Strategy prior to it's formal launch

**4.1 List of appendices**

The following appendices are included with this report:

- Appendix 1, Final Strategy



# Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy

2024-27





## Foreword:

The NHS is an amazing institution: one that people who live in the UK are justifiably proud of. And at its heart, the NHS is about people: the people we care for and help to keep well, and the people who deliver our services. Every member of staff across NHS Highland makes a difference every day, whether that's in a kind word as you serve someone in the canteen or compassionate care at the end of someone's life.

Our staff's health and wellbeing is vital to maintaining our services and this strategy sets out how we will care for our staff so they can provide great care, working somewhere that cares for employees and fosters a sense of community contributes to staff satisfaction and team morale, helping us to retain and attract good people. Wellbeing improves performance and allows people to achieve their full potential, benefitting both them and the organisation.

Your work can be demanding and can be extremely rewarding. We care for people 24/7, 365 days a year. We cover a huge area, including remote and rural communities. We deal with physically and emotionally challenging situations and we are there for the people in our communities when they need us. This makes it all the more important that we recognise the demands of working in health and social care as well as the pressures our staff can experience outside of work. We know many of our people carry out caring roles at home, and the current cost of living crisis is being widely felt. This strategy sets out how we will help our staff to manage their health and wellbeing and provide support when they need it. We will develop and promote a range of wellbeing resources for staff to support them to have good mental, physical and financial health. We will also ensure that we have the right support available for staff who need assistance with their health and wellbeing.

A healthy and happy workforce will benefit both our teams and the people who use our services, so we all have a responsibility to do all we can to promote wellbeing. This strategy sets out how we will look after ourselves and each other: we are proud to be part of that commitment.



Elspeth Caithness  
Employee Director



Gareth Adkins  
Director of People and Culture



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## Introductions:

In NHS Highland, people are at the heart of everything we do and this ethos shaped the [Together We Care Strategy](#) developed through engagement with the workforce, communities, partners and wider population. The Together We Care strategy outlines NHS Highland's strategic objectives for our Population, People and Partnerships, appropriately linking to Highland and Argyll and Bute HSCP strategies.

For our People, our aim is simply to be a great place to work. The wellbeing of our workforce is a key priority and is outlined by our 'Nurture well' commitment. Our objective is to support colleagues' physical and mental health and wellbeing through all the stages of their life and career with us and to foster an inclusive and kind culture where difference is valued and respected.

These objectives link with Scottish Government's commitment to Improving Wellbeing and Working Culture and the [associated Action Plans](#).

Both strategies centre around three main strands:

Wellbeing

Leadership

Equality

that support and complement each other, working together to develop a great place to work.



## Workplace Wellbeing:

Workplace wellbeing is a complex environment encompassing physical and mental health including aspects such as financial health, relationships, security, purpose and environment. These factors are often interlinked with what is happening in one area of life impacting on other areas both in and out of work. NHS Highland support a balanced approach to work-life integration and for this reason our strategy takes a holistic approach to wellbeing. It recognises employees as complex individuals with a variety of needs that support their wellbeing.

As an employer we are committed to supporting the workforce both in the environment and resources we provide. We are also committed to assisting colleagues to support and better care for themselves.



## Environment :

NHS Highland recognise the importance of creating healthy, safe and supportive environments and are always seeking to improve the estate and facilities that shape our everyday working environments. The Estates team have various space utilisation projects to maximise and improve our working environments and the data gathered from staff feeds into these plans. This includes the outdoors and natural/green spaces within our estate. This is also referenced within the vision and values of the Board and wider NHS Scotland.

It is not just the physical environment that requires attention but also the digital one. With more system utilisation and reliance than ever before, it is recognised that this environment should also feel supportive and be continually improving to complement our work. Training and supporting the workforce with digital developments is important to the work they do and their wellbeing at work.

It is acknowledged that all of the factors contained within the People plans contribute to the overall culture of the Board.

## Health and Wellbeing :

To support overall wellbeing there is a wealth of guidance in the [NHS wellbeing hub](#), Public Health Scotland's [Mentally Health Workplace](#) and [NHS Highland wellbeing pages](#). These pages direct employees and managers to resources, advice and links on all aspects of health and wellbeing:

healthy mind

body and spirit

occupational health

financial healthy and well being

workplace support and resources

This is a constantly evolving landscape: developing, promoting and communicating available resources and ensuring managers and the workforce know where to obtain information and what local and national supports are available. A summary of our support is available within the Wellbeing pages.

## Physical and Mental Health: .....

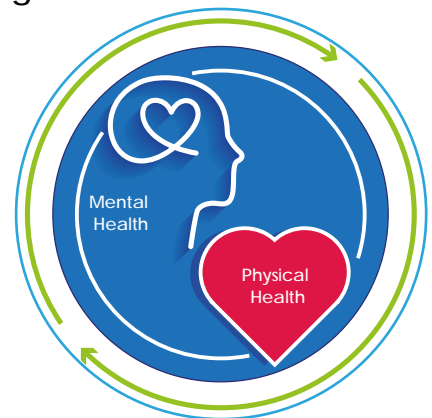
In addition to the various general health and wellbeing resources and supports we must acknowledge that post Covid, the physical working environment which many of us work in has changed significantly. This brings with it different health challenges. With many people working from home, support from leadership and management needs to be channelled in a different way. Agile working



discussions, Beware of the Chair and Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments offer support for the physical work environment but there are also the mental and social aspects of this new working environment. Employees must be encouraged to take sufficient breaks, to avoid being 'always available' and addressing the isolation and lack of physical team relationships that many report. This is a challenge for both managers and employees alike and must be supported in the best way possible to ensure colleagues are healthy, engaged and working in a safe way.

[The Scottish Government Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) sets out a clear vision for future population mental health, wellbeing and care – “a vision of a Scotland, free from stigma and inequality, where everyone fulfils their right to achieve the best mental health and wellbeing possible”.

NHS Highland share the same vision, ensuring that Physical and Mental Health are on an equal footing and reduce the stigma by improving access and enabling staff in all services to speak about mental health and wellbeing.



Speaking up about mental health, has been both a national and local objective. NHS Highland is a member of the National Mentally Healthy Workplace group and this informs our wellbeing offerings. We must focus on Prevention and Early Intervention, ensuring the right kind of support and advice is in place for people across a range of settings, to allow people to take control of their own mental health and wellbeing in a way that works for them.

Scottish Government recognise 3 key pillars of wellbeing in their strategy: Promotion, Prevention and Provision of Services. This is also recognised in NHS Highland's support provisions and initiatives and is encapsulated in this Strategy.

## In addition to general information sharing:

### We provide:

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|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Spiritual care service</li><li>● Occupational health with additional psychological support</li><li>● Health and Safety service</li><li>● Confidential contact-currently provided by the Guardian service</li><li>● Mental health first aiders piloted</li><li>● Promotion of stress at work and mental health courses and virtual events</li><li>● Promotion of Spaces for Listening</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Staff Psychological Wellbeing Network</li><li>● Cognitive Behaviour Therapy</li><li>● Employee assistance programme</li><li>● Promotion of self-care for physical, mental and social wellbeing</li><li>● Flexible and supportive policies and practice to assist employees in balancing the responsibilities of home and work, eg caring responsibilities</li><li>● Physiotherapy</li><li>● Promotion of trauma awareness</li></ul> |
|--|---|

### We commit to:

- Review and promote the stress at work process ensuring employees and managers are supported to discuss stress and wider mental health, supporting appropriate actions and adjustments
- Supporting the development of wellbeing champions / advocates and mental health first aiders (as appropriate) across the board area
- Continue to link with national and regional wellbeing networks, linking this back to the NHS Highland strategy and actions
- Developing data sets and monitoring tools within the wellbeing environment to inform the Board and localised activity e.g. a wellbeing dashboard, illustrating performance, progress and targets for improvement
- Join up data sources such as absence, stress risk assessments, occupational health support and exit interviews to inform support of stress and mental health in a more pro-active way
- Input to and promotion of women's health strategy and associated initiatives e.g. menopause awareness
- Input and promotion of the Neurodiversity strategy
- Developing proactive and preventative strategies promoting personal resilience
- Utilise the wellbeing diagnostic tool

## Which will result in:

- Improvements in health outcomes for staff, with intended reduction in sickness absence, mental health absence and work-related stress
- Improved communication and a wider wellbeing support network, linking service, Board and national experiences and priorities to inform actions
- Rich data sets to illustrate current performance, inform activities and evidence progress and improvement
- Providing a joined up and targeted approach to initiatives and agreed priorities supporting efficient and collaborative working

## Spiritual Care:

The balance of wellbeing across all three aspects of our being;

Our body holds our physical strength and ability, our mind holds our thoughts and emotions, and our spirit is the essence of who we are, our meaning hopes and values. When we balance these three aspects we achieve optimal wellbeing and when we do not, our ability to function can be compromised.

NHS Highland has spiritual care services to support the spirituality with no assumption about personal convictions or religious beliefs but seeks to understand the person as a whole.

The service aims to provide spiritual care to patients, carers, volunteers and staff, ensuring that people remain at the centre of health and wellbeing by supporting:- spiritual care, religious care, cultural care, bereavement care, listening services, staff support service.



## Healthy Lifestyle:

Nutrition, hydration, exercise and eating a healthy diet can affect all aspects of physical and mental wellbeing. As a health aware employer NHS Highland promote healthy living and support embedding this into the services we provide

### We provide:

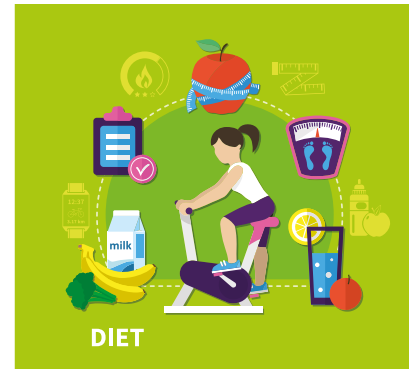
- Healthy options in canteens and eating areas
- Information about healthy choices and positive changes in lifestyle that can make a difference – e.g. alcohol and addiction awareness, smoking cessation, weight management
- Promotion of physical activity and healthy lifestyle events – e.g. step count challenge
- Discounted gym membership, active travel plans and cycle to work scheme

### We commit to:

- Adapt and respond to the asks of employees when considering our wellbeing offerings and support
- Respond to the data gathered from the Project Wingman campaign which indicates interest and more focus in the following areas:
  - Mindfulness
  - Physical movement and exercise
  - Fatigue
  - Healthy eating
  - Sleep management
  - Workload and time management

### Which will result in:

- A more collaborative approach to health promotion, responding to the asks and needs of the workforce
- Improved employee engagement indicators with clearer alignment of cause and effect – “you said, we did” and where possible evidencing result/impact
- Evidencing what the workforce have fed back and what we are doing about it





## Financial Health:



Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) refers to financial wellbeing as feeling secure and in control, alongside being financially resilient, confident and empowered.

The current economic climate has caused numerous risks to the financial wellbeing of the workforce. As the UK enters a recession predicted to be the worst in a generation, the CIPD report that in-work poverty is experienced by 1 in 8 workers and encourages supporting employees to make the most of their money and finances on a day to day basis.

Financial wellbeing is currently the least common area included in wellbeing strategies and needs to be pushed up the social, political and business agendas. (CIPD 2023).

### We Provide:


- An Employee Assistance Programme which can support with financial planning along with finding advice to help to support financial health and wellbeing
- Information about benefits and entitlements, childcare costs, energy saving support
- Employer pension scheme with a 93% membership across Highland Board
- Support with gambling or other challenges that can put a strain on finances and relationships
- Links to Highland Council and A&B Council welfare teams, citizens advice, credit unions and financial education
- Promotion of assistance with child-care costs and winter fuel grants and food aid networks
- Promotion of lift share scheme
- Planning for retirement course
- Money Counts course and access to signposting information

### We commit to:



- Gather information on employees needs and respond to them
- Continue to support and build on the resources already available
- Continuously improve processes ensuring that pay, grading and expenses are paid as speedily and accurately as possible

## Which will result in:



- Improved awareness of the supports and benefits that exist
- Improvement in employee experience of NHS Highland processes
- Responsive provision to employee need, considering how we can best support our workforce to best manage their finances




The [Together We Care strategy](#), 'People' outcomes focus on wellbeing, leadership and equality and this aligns to Scottish Governments, [fair work convention](#) providing the workforce with an effective voice, opportunities, security, fulfilment and respect.



The [Once for Scotland policies](#) promote NHS Scotland as a modern exemplar employer, showcasing the NHS core values and NHS Highland People Function provides advice support and training to embed this practice.



Supporting the Area Partnership Forum, each directorate has local partnership forums to support the employee voice and partnership working at a local and Board-wide level.



Workload is often an area identified as a challenge for employees with reports of high presenteeism and burnout. This is acknowledged in all the people strategies and informs activity in the wellbeing, workforce planning and leadership development space. All employees should be supported with their work load and development being clear on objectives and progress. This is embedded in the Culture and Leadership framework.

It is recognised that the core enablers for health and wellbeing are comprehensive communication structures, embedded leadership development practice, pleasant working environments and sound governance.



Together We Care

## Leadership:

Leaders and managers have a central role in supporting their employees and creating the conditions to allow teams and individuals to flourish. They have the responsibility to take charge and take care of their employees both supporting them and empowering them to manage their own wellbeing. Leaders must continually grow and develop to best support their teams in an ever changing environment keeping up to date with the boards leadership development program.

All wellbeing activity links to, and is supported by, the Culture and Leadership framework striving to ensure that leaders are the best that they can be and align with the Board vision and values. Increased knowledge, understanding and skills embed a caring, compassionate and inclusive culture needed to create a positive impact on workforce wellbeing and the overall culture of the Board. The central theme in all leadership activity is compassionate leadership and in recent years much focus has been given to this area Supporting Civility Saves Lives, Caring with Compassion and Compassionate Conversations.

## Communication and Engagement:

To create a positive working environment requires input across the workforce. Supporting employee wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, encouraging engagement from the whole workforce. Effective and meaningful communication is key to the delivery of this wellbeing strategy. Wellbeing is intrinsically linked to employee engagement and listening to our employee voice. Our wellbeing offering must respond to the needs of the workforce, both managers and employees, and be multi channelled to increase reach.

Communication with the workforce is essential, developing open honest and engaging provision which is inclusive to all and most importantly, known about and easily accessible. The communication team are key stakeholders on the health and wellbeing working group and all wellbeing requirements are supported by the [Boards Communication and Engagement strategy](#).

## Monitoring and Evaluation:

To assess the health of the organisation and the strategies being adopted measurement and evaluation are required. Tools like the iMatter engagement tool, referrals to the various support services, workforce data, staff engagement opportunities, and analytics, monitoring and measuring staff wellbeing and strategy impact / effectiveness and inform future decisions and activity.

# The Implementation Plan:

This strategy sets out the plans for the next 3 years (2024-2027), mirroring the Together We Care timeline [basics, build, better, best](#). The wellbeing offerings have been in place for many years and are regularly expanded. The current focus is establishing the foundations and supporting wider communication and promotion. The table below illustrates the implementation plan for the next 3 years and this is supported by a more detailed action plan with short medium and long term priorities.

Year	Theme	Actions
1	Established foundation	Group creation, leadership training, communication hub setup, staff wellbeing forums formed, baseline data gathered
2	Expand initiatives	Implement Highland wellbeing program, regular wellbeing assessments and measurement, enhance support services as required
3	Consolidate and Evaluate	Review strategy effectiveness, make necessary adjustments, and reinforce successful initiatives.

# Governance:

To ensure that the necessary people, governance, systems and processes are in place to enable the fulfilment of this strategy the Wellbeing Group reports to the People and Culture Portfolio Board and will provide regular reports to the Area Partnership Forum, Local Partnership Fora, Staff Governance Committee, and other relevant forums.

