

Local Government



Supporting
Mental Health and
Wellbeing



COSLA

Foreword



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Local Government plays a fundamental role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our communities. This year we welcomed a Mental Health Awareness Week focused on the importance of community, recognising that being part of safe and positive communities is vital for our mental health and wellbeing. Communities provide a sense of belonging, purpose and support, and local authorities are crucial in creating the environments and opportunities to bring them together.

However, our role in mental health and wellbeing support is also much broader than this. We work across the social determinants of mental health, for example poverty, employment and housing, where an individual's experiences can significantly impact their wellbeing. We respond to local need to provide a wide range of support, services and professional expertise that promote positive mental health and support those who become unwell and, in our role as employers, we also seek to ensure that our staff have access to the best training and support possible. This document intends to illustrate the range of levers held and the volume of positive work undertaken by Local Government to support mental health and wellbeing (recognising the scale and interconnectivity of it means it cannot be represented in full), drawing on examples from across the scope of our work.

In 2023, COSLA and Scottish Government published our joint national Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The strategy lays out a 'promote, prevent, provide' approach where we aim to:

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

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

Within this document, examples of how local authorities, and our staff, support the mental health and wellbeing of our communities is set within this context.

Whilst recognising the range of ways we can support the mental health and wellbeing of our communities, we know that providing this support is not without challenge. Stringent Local Government settlements place pressure on local provision that both directly and indirectly supports mental health and wellbeing. We face a national housing emergency, there is high demand for mental health support placing pressure on both services and the workforce that provide them, and factors such as climate change, the cost-of-living crisis and international conflict have the potential to further impact mental health and wellbeing.

Against this backdrop it is all the more important to recognise, support and adequately resource the range of opportunities we are able take to ensure positive mental health and wellbeing. I welcome the opportunity to highlight them in this document.

Promote

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

Local Government are able to utilise local knowledge, and a range of expertise and communications networks to share key messaging about mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention. This can build understanding of mental health and wellbeing, help tackle stigma and discrimination and help ensure people are aware of where to get help if it is needed. Our role in the delivery of education and learning supports the communication of core mental health messaging and the local development of this work means it can best take into account the needs of, and opportunities to reach, local communities.

Campaigns and Communication



Waste Operations

Local Government employees have a range of unique links into communities where there are opportunities to raise awareness of mental health. Having experienced several suicides within the waste service, **Fife Council's Waste Operations Team** have been working since 2023 to champion mental health awareness, especially for men, around suicide risk. They wear hi viz polo shirts and have placed adverts on bin lorries, having designed cab wraps alongside a local company, to promote mental health organisations and charities people can get in touch with for help and self-referrals to provision.



Fife



Mind Yer Mind Campaign

Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership put together the **Mind Yer Mind** Campaign to encourage the people of Aberdeenshire to look after their mental wellbeing. Developed following strong public engagement, it's based on the internationally recognised '5 Steps to Wellbeing': Connections, Learning, Active, Taking Notice, and Giving.

The campaign uses local 'ambassadors' – including triple Olympic swimmer Hannah Miley MBE and world-renowned percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie – who champion their stories of how they look after their own mental wellbeing to encourage people to think about their own wellbeing, and to provide inspiration and ideas on how to integrate these into everyday life. A dedicated '[Mind Yer Mind](#)' website provides information and a toolkit for residents along with details of local mental health service provision.

Aberdeenshire



Suicide Prevention Campaign

In 2022/23 **North Lanarkshire Council** made a film targeting 16-24 yr olds. All their campaign collateral supports the message: '**Hiding your feelings can make things worse, let's talk**'. Their short film can be viewed [here](#).

For promotion on social media, the film was broken down into 3 shorts which were particularly successful on Snapchat with click through rates generally more than double the industry average. Since the films and shorts were made available to the public, they have had over 35,000 views. In 2023/24 this was followed by a film targeting 30-60 yrs olds and anyone that might be worried about someone from this age group. Its message is '**Never assume someone's okay. Ask. Keep asking. Let's talk.**' Again, this was broken down into three shorts and the materials have had over 50,000 views so far. The film can be viewed [here](#).

North Lanarkshire



Hoarding and self-neglect guidance for practitioners

A new guidance document around **hoarding and self-neglect** was launched in **Orkney** in May 2024 to mark the start of National Hoarding Awareness Week, in a bid to raise awareness of lesser-known mental health conditions, recognising that often people think of hoarding and self-neglect as 'lifestyle choices' rather than a mental health difficulty.

The guidance, which can be viewed [here](#), was distributed throughout the Council, NHS Orkney, support services and third sector agencies.

Orkney



Supporting Local Government Employees

Local Government is a significant employer, currently employing approximately 240,000 people across Scotland. Employers can actively promote and support the mental health and wellbeing of their staff.

Local Govt



Employee Wellbeing

Fife Council takes a proactive and joined-up approach to employee wellbeing by raising awareness, improving access to support, strengthening employee voice, and developing confident, informed managers. This approach is underpinned by a refreshed supporting wellbeing at work policy, which adopts a holistic view—encompassing mental, physical, financial, and social wellbeing—and recognises the importance of supporting employees with both work-related and personal stress.

Through its “**Wellbeing Matters**” programme, staff are regularly signposted to a range of internal and external support services, including Counselling, Mental Health First Aid, Physiotherapy and community-based resources such as Citizens Advice and Fife Carers. Alongside learning opportunities for employees in areas such as neurodiversity, self-care and resilience, staff are supported through targeted training, including the ‘**Mentally Healthy Workplace**’ programme, and are equipped with practical tools and guidance on managing stress, physical health, and attendance. This dual focus ensures employees are empowered to take ownership of their wellbeing, while managers are prepared to foster a supportive and responsive working environment.

Fife



Talk Mental Health Campaign

During Autumn 2024, **Trading Standards Scotland** developed a campaign following on from ‘Talk Money Week’ which drew on the impact of borrowing from an illegal money lender or being affected by a scam, given the links between financial instability and mental health. The call to action included highlighting organisations who can provide support and advice. The total reach for the campaign was 138,138 consumers and was delivered via social media, the Trading Standards Scotland ScamShare Bulletin and Neighbourhood Watch ALERT.

A consistent message issued by TSS throughout their campaign work is the importance of community and looking out for your neighbours. The impact of scams, doorstep crime or illegal money lending can be extremely isolating, so they continually promote the importance of community and the messaging that consumers are not alone.

Trading Standards Scotland

Promoting Mental Health through Education and Learning

Education and learning settings, from school-based learning to community learning and development provide a fundamental opportunity to promote positive mental health and wellbeing messages, providing individuals with the information they need to support themselves and others.



Embedding Mental Health into School Culture

At **Wallace High School within Stirling Council**, mental health and wellbeing has been embedded into the fabric of school culture, ensuring that both pupils and staff have access to meaningful support. Their team of pupil Mental Health Champions actively promote mental health awareness across the school, delivering peer-led lessons and fostering a culture of openness and support. Trained Mental Health First Aiders also provide a first point of contact for those in need, while staff trained in suicide intervention develop safe plans where required.

A key priority for the school is challenging the stigma surrounding mental health. Through visual displays, assemblies, and annual themed Mental Health Week, they start conversations that matter, exploring key topics such as resilience, the Five Ways to Wellbeing, and the importance of sleep. These initiatives include guest speakers, targeted lessons, and a range of interactive activities designed to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to manage their own wellbeing. In response to findings from the SHINE Mental Health pupil survey, they are placing a particular emphasis on resilience and the development of personal coping strategies to support pupils in navigating challenges both in and beyond school.

To ensure a consistent and proactive approach, they provide structured mental health education and staff training. Pupils from S1 to S4 follow a progressive mental health curriculum, while those in S5/6 receive training on suicide prevention and wellbeing management. To complement this, they have developed a range of accessible resources, including a school-specific mental health website, a comprehensive support brochure, and a dedicated Health Hub within the school library, offering books, leaflets, and links to trusted sources. In addition, staff participate in annual training to identify early warning signs and respond effectively to disclosures using the school's Mental Health Protocol. At Wallace High School, they remain committed to fostering a learning environment where mental health is prioritised, stigma is challenged, and every individual is supported to thrive.

Prevent

Local authorities prevent mental health issues occurring or escalating and tackle underlying causes, adversities and inequalities wherever possible.

Our mental health and wellbeing is influenced by a range of factors including psychological factors such as trauma, biological factors like physical health, and social factors such as poverty, housing, and access to blue and green spaces for example. Local Government provides a range of supports and services across the determinants of mental health and so holds significant potential levers in supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Physical Activity

Local Government supports the physical activity of its communities in a range of ways, with examples including enabling physical activity in school, in outdoor spaces and via active travel. For example:



The Daily Mile

The Daily Mile is undertaken in schools across Scotland aiming to improve the physical, social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing of children regardless of age, ability or personal circumstances. It is a social physical activity, with children running, jogging or wheeling a mile a day – at their own pace – in the fresh air with friends.

Scotland



Active Schools

2025 marks 20 years of **Active Schools** – delivered in partnership by local authorities and sportscotland. For two decades, staff and volunteers have provided quality sporting opportunities to school pupils across Scotland, including **Orkney**. Its mantra – More Children, More Active, More Often – has remained at the heart of the work of the Active Schools team in Orkney, from across the mainland to the outer isles.

In partnership with volunteers, Active Schools deliver countless sessions to young people in Orkney every year through the likes of Play on Pedals, Bike ability, Learn to Ride, the Parasport Festival, Transition Sport, inter-school activities, golf, rugby, netball, football and the holiday programmes, which included a number of isles Active Schools activity days with school children.

Orkney



Opportunities for Active Travel

Glasgow

There are clear links between active travel initiatives and positive health and wellbeing outcomes. As outlined by Sustrans in 2023, walking, wheeling and cycling contributes to a decline in 4,251 serious long-term health conditions (including mental health) each year. For a number of years, COSLA has worked closely with Transport Scotland and local authorities on active travel policy. One example is the **South City Way** in **Glasgow**. This 3km-long protected cycleway connecting Queens Park to Trongate was funded jointly by Transport Scotland and Glasgow City Council. Data shows that in one 48-hour period in September 2024 there were over 5400 recorded bike journeys on that route.



Shawlands Crescent Playpark

South Lanarkshire

To promote activity, mental health, and overall wellbeing for residents of the **Shawlands Crescent Gypsy/Traveller site** in Larkhall, **South Lanarkshire Council** worked with residents to upgrade the children's playpark. Site residents were consulted on the design of the park and the equipment included, with the young people being awarded the final say. The playpark now features a range of equipment catering to different age groups, encouraging active play and social interaction. The importance of children having access to a safe space to play outdoors was recognised by all partners and this project provides that for families now and in the future. The playpark is regularly enjoyed by the children and the parents welcome the safe place.



Physical Activity for Health

Local Government

In 2024 **Local Government** supported the **Physical Activity for Health Framework** which strongly articulates the benefits of physical activity in promoting and maintaining positive mental health and wellbeing. The new Framework takes a whole-system approach, based around eight strategic outcomes with the aim to improve population levels of physical activity. The actions are wide ranging, ambitious, and long term and can be undertaken by a range of partners.

The intention is to provide direction to those who are developing plans at either national or local level such that they can both consider actions which will improve levels of physical activity as part of those plans and ensure that these actions are firmly evidence-based. At the time of writing, Public Health Scotland and sportscotland are supporting thirteen local authorities and community planning partners to adopt the approach to inform the local strategic direction of physical activity and sport and shape local Physical Activity Strategies.

Poverty and Employment

The connection between poverty and mental health is well evidenced. Councils take a range of actions to mitigate poverty including the provision of free school meals to Primary School children up to Primary 5 and Primary 6 and 7 pupils in receipt of Scottish Child Payment, it is estimated this would allow [25,000 children access nutritious healthy food](#). Work to prevent and mitigate the effects of poverty would be anticipated to impact mental health and wellbeing and some areas have sought to address poverty with a mental health focus:



Money Matters Welfare Rights in Schools Project

A project in **North Ayrshire** provides an example of work which has sought to address poverty directly as a key driver of poor mental wellbeing, aiming to mitigate the effects of poverty faced by families through ensuring that parents/carers and pupils receive their legal entitlement to state benefits. A partnership agreement between North Ayrshire Council Education, HCSP Children & Families and the HSCP Money Matters Team resulted in funding for one full time Welfare Rights Officer to deliver welfare rights services in a number of North Ayrshire Council's Secondary Schools. Based on the success of the programme the local authority has recruited additional Welfare Rights Officers and the service is now open to all educational establishments in North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire Council has also partnered with Mental Health UK to pilot the [Me and My Money Programme](#) which seeks to reduce young people's anxieties around money by increasing their understanding of the interconnections between money and mental health.

Evidence also demonstrates that access to good quality, fair work opportunities are likely to have positive impacts on mental health and being in work, where this is a positive experience, can be seen as a protective factor for mental health. Unemployment has been linked to a higher risk of mental health problems, so employability services - which support people to move closer to, or into, the labour market - can play a role in supporting and promoting good mental health within communities. Employability services, which are delivered in response to local needs across the 32 local authority areas, also have a crucial role to play in supporting individuals who face significant barriers to work as a result of a mental health condition via Specialist Employability Support (SES). For example, The **Equal Programme** delivered by North Ayrshire Council provides supported employment opportunities for people with mental health, physical, or neurological conditions.

Housing

Housing has a significant impact on a person's mental health, influencing various aspects of wellbeing. Financial concerns related to housing costs may cause stress or anxiety; safety concerns, relationships or overcrowding related to housing may also impact and if your home does not meet your physical health needs it may also affect your mental health and wellbeing. Secure and stable housing provides a sense of safety, which is important for mental well-being. Instability, such as frequent moves or the threat of eviction, can also lead to anxiety and stress. Scotland is currently facing a housing emergency, with very limited housing stock, and against this backdrop housing officers continue seeking to support individuals requiring housing towards a solution that best meets their needs.



A Warm Scottish Welcome- Ukrainian Resettlement Project

North Lanarkshire Council responded to the Scottish Government's request to support people arriving in Scotland who had fled the Ukrainian conflict. The council's existing tower reprovisioning programme is replacing demolished towers with new-build housing, but the opportunity arose to support Ukrainian families by refurbishing empty properties where demolition had yet to start. The council rapidly responded and achieved its objective of turning around 200 empty properties in two towers within six months to be fully habitable, which has supported the resettlement of around 200 Ukrainian families who were previously living in hotels.

A range of supports across multiple partners were put in place for households moving into the properties, which were refurbished to the same standards as all the council's properties. The resettlement team also works with housing, social work, financial inclusion, education services, and health to ensure families settle within the community. Office bases in the two locations were established to provide on-site support. It took approximately six months to complete the housing refurbishment and since then, the families have established themselves and integrated with the local communities in North Lanarkshire.

Access to Nature

Research shows that people who are more connected with nature are usually happier and more likely to report feeling their lives are worthwhile. Local Government plays a key role in creating and maintaining local blue and green spaces.



Scotland's Nature Networks

Nature Networks are corridors or stepping stones developed to link together areas rich in the natural environment, biodiversity or other environment projects. As outlined in the Nature Networks Framework, these Networks also offer multiple health and wellbeing benefits through access to blue and green spaces, as well as through participation in community engagement initiatives. Local authorities play a crucial role in the development, implementation and management of Nature Networks.

Scotland

Relationships and Isolation

By providing local spaces, services, events and support to build networks Local Government helps create and support the community connections and connections to culture and relationships that are crucial for our mental wellbeing, particularly for those who are of particular risk of isolation including, for example, those living in rural areas, the elderly and New Scots.



'Library Natters'

Midlothian Council launched a '**Library Natters**' project in Dalkeith Library in December 2024 to combat loneliness and social isolation. The library has introduced a comfortable social area and a yearlong programme of free events for the community. To date there has been six targeted events, including events with a specific focus on carers and a women's only event in March for International Women's Day. The space is in use daily, utilised by a reminiscence group and the local primary school, and has increased the use and enjoyment of the library by communities.

Midlothian



Age 16-25 Drop-in Service

In response to the need for enhanced mental health and wellbeing support for young people, a new **16-25 Drop-In** was launched in the Benarty area of **Fife**. The idea for the drop-in emerged following a community engagement event held in November 2023, which was organised to support the community after the tragic loss of several young lives in the area. Key themes that emerged from engagement with young people highlighted the need for support with managing feelings of anxiety, help with self-harm and staying safe, as well as guidance on employment opportunities.

The initiative provides a safe space for young people to engage in social interactions, receive support and guidance and signposting to relevant services. Input comes from organisations such as Clued Up (drug and alcohol support), the police, online safety teams, and, most popularly, Cowdenbeath League of Boardgamers and Roleplayers (CLOBAR) – a local community gaming hub. The 16-25 Drop-In has become a valued space for young people, providing meaningful support, opportunities for skill development, and connections to vital services. By responding directly to community needs, this initiative exemplifies good practice in Local Government's approach to mental health and wellbeing.



I come to the drop-in to give me something to do. It gives me a chance to interact with people I wouldn't normally interact with and gain new experiences. I've really enjoyed the input from CLOBAR.



Fife



Ukraine Language Café

A volunteer-run **Orkney-Ukraine Language Café** was set up by the Resettlement Team at **Orkney Islands Council** as part of the Resettlement Schemes project for resettled Ukrainians who are looking to improve their English language skills.

During the 40th anniversary of Volunteers' Week 2024, the Language Café was highlighted as a shining example of how valuable volunteering is within communities. In celebrating and recognising volunteers, Nataliia Kuzmina, the Council's Project Manager (Resettlement Schemes), said, "On behalf of Orkney Islands Council and Ukrainians in Orkney, I would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Language Café volunteers. The work and support you provide to displaced Ukrainians is invaluable. You create a safe and welcoming space where the refugees not only improve their English language skills but also heal their wounds and regain confidence."



Orkney

The quality of our relationships can also impact our mental health and wellbeing, and local authorities take a range of approaches that recognise the importance of, and support the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships, particularly for children and young people. For example:



Nurturing Approaches

Stirling Council have developed a [website](#) with resources which supports implementing nurturing approaches in educational settings. The resources include lesson plans, professional learning, assemblies, family workshops and data gathering tools.

Stirling



Emotional Literacy Support

Aberdeen City Council created a network of **Emotional Literacy Support Assistants** (ELSA). The ELSA project was developed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils from within their own resources. Aberdeen City Educational Psychological Service used this programme to train ELSAs in the local authority - training takes 6 days and is followed by career-long supervision in small groups led by Educational Psychologists. The ELSA's work with individual children or small groups to promote a sense of belonging, emotional safety and connection to the school. ELSA's develop and foster emotional intelligence and social skills in pupils of all ages through a range of activities, experiences and games.

Aberdeen City



Family Support

Many areas now provide **support to the whole family** so that children and young people can thrive in their learning and health outcomes. Examples of this include joint working through community learning services, providing peer support, mutual self-help and strengthening community links between families. We know that poverty can play a role in poorer mental health outcomes, therefore areas have programmes of joint work between money advice, employability and early learning and childcare services, meaning that while children learn and play, parents and carers can access support, in turn supporting their whole family.

The creation of whole family support services to keep children with their parents, where it is safe to do so, has been another development over recent years. This may involve family therapy, practical support, peer support, health and wellbeing advice, counselling and other inputs such as support from mental health or alcohol and drug services, and is highly individualised to the family, with the intention to prevent the need for children to enter foster or residential care. Through these kinds of approaches, the wellbeing of families can be strengthened and relationships supported, preventing trauma and reducing the risk of mental health challenges at a later stage in life.

Scotland

Sense of Safety

A sense of safety and belonging in our communities is important for our mental health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, this can be threatened in a range of ways that can impact both individuals and communities, for example through the threat of, or experience of, antisocial behaviour or violence including gender-based violence, racism and homophobia. Local Government takes a variety of approaches to preventing harm and supporting safety, most often working in collaboration with other public sector partners.



Community Safety Unit

The **West Lothian Community Safety Unit** (CSU) was formed in April 2010 bringing together partners with a diverse business remit including Police Scotland, West Lothian Council and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. Members include experts in education, health, fire prevention, crime prevention, road safety, antisocial behaviour, drug awareness, analytical provision, performance management and community engagement. Recognising that issues like antisocial behaviour are most effectively addressed through partnership working, the CSU aims to deliver positive outcomes for residents by coordinating efforts across various agencies.

The partnership works towards the 'PIER' concept, which forms the backbone of the joint working by all partners when tackling Community Safety.

PREVENTION: Activities that stop an action or behaviour from occurring, or reoccurring

INFORMATION: Data that can assist and identify opportunities

ENFORCEMENT: Activities that tackle an identified issue or individual's behaviour

REHABILITATION: Activities that promote a positive action or behaviour

West Lothian



Equally Safe

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) encompasses a spectrum of violence and abuse, including domestic abuse, rape, sexual assault, childhood sexual abuse, stalking, harassment, commercial sexual exploitation, and harmful practices like female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and 'honour' based violence. Women and girls who experience VAWG are likely to suffer poorer mental health and are at higher risk of multiple mental health needs. While men and boys may benefit from gendered norms and inequalities that give rise to VAWG, they are also harmed by them. Gender norms place unhealthy expectations on men and boys, contributing to mental health problems, including disproportionate suicide rates, drug-related deaths, and violence from other men.

Equally Safe, co-owned by COSLA and the Scottish Government, is Scotland's strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against women and girls, specifically violence, abuse and exploitation directed at them because of their gender. Embedded across local authority areas, multi-agency Violence Against Women and Girls Partnerships are recognised as the key engine driver of implementation in our goal to prevent, tackle and eradicate all forms of VAWG.

Scotland



Violence Against Women Partnership (VAWP)

Every year **Dundee City's Multi Agency VAWP** organises a broad programme of public events to support the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, which is a global campaign calling for the elimination of all forms of violence against women. Open to all members of the public and communities within Dundee, events have included a Travelling Roadshow offering information sessions on preventing and tackling VAWG (including bystander approaches), a conversation cafe and creative design and dance workshops. Working with specialist VAWG services, youth and community services, further and higher education sectors and local organisations across the city, high levels of community engagement is achieved annually, with high profile events including the lighting up of key buildings, Reclaim the Night Marches, theatrical events and even Mob-Dance events delivering high levels of community participation in efforts to challenge all forms of violence against women and girls in the city and to heighten women's safety

More broadly the VAWP has taken a strategic, multi-agency approach to tackling violence against women, drug misuse, and related mental health challenges. This plays a key role in ensuring coordination between the Alcohol & Drugs Partnership (ADP), child and adult protection committees, and related frontline services. Dundee City Council leads efforts to integrate services under the Protecting People framework, fostering a more holistic and coordinated response.

Agency

An individual or communities' ability to act on their own behalf, make decisions about their future, and influence the decisions of others, empowers individuals and fosters a sense of control and ownership that can support and protect wellbeing.

Local Government supports local decision making, local participation and agency. This includes through participatory budgeting where since 2021 Local Government has spent nearly £500M, giving local people a direct say in how money is spent in their communities.

By supporting individuals across a wide range of social determinants Local Government are supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their communities.

A range of action is also taken across Local Government to prevent re-traumatisation and to prevent concerns from escalating.



Trauma Informed Approaches

The **National Trauma Transformation Programme** published the **Roadmap for Creating Trauma-Informed and Responsive Change**. This resource has been designed to help services and organisations in Scotland identify and reflect on progress, strengths and opportunities for embedding a trauma-informed and responsive approach across policy and practice. Local Government is committed to the ambition to embed a trauma-informed and responsive approach across systems, services and workforces. Trauma champions have been embedded within local authorities and, within the range of support we provide, Local Government is working to ensure that staff are trauma informed and individuals are not re-traumatised.

Scotland



Resettlement Team

The **resettlement teams** at **South Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire Council** (CSU) work regularly with health colleagues including Clinical Psychologists to ensure that they are fully aware of Trauma-informed practices, and they review their working methods to minimise and remove anything which can retraumatise the service user.

NHS Lanarkshire in partnership with both resettlement teams, health teams in hotels, and ESOL and community engagement colleagues highlighted the need to support teams working intensely and directly with people who arrived through the Ukrainian emergency. Ensuring the resilience and physical and mental health of everyone directly involved with supporting new arrivals was essential. NHS Lanarkshire set up regular sessions working with the teams involved.

Support and training are undertaken by a Senior Clinical Psychologist/Trauma Implementation Co-ordinator and a Health Improvement Co-ordinator. The training covers the following: -

- What is trauma – acute/complex
- Prevalence of trauma in Scotland and refugee/asylum seeker/displaced person populations
- Connections between trauma and social determinants of health and inequalities, lifelong consequences

South & North Lanarkshire



Multiagency Approach to Young People in Suicidal Crisis

In **North Ayrshire** on a multiagency level, the Education Service contributed to the development of an authority-wide **Suicide Prevention Pathway**: where if a young person attends the Emergency Department of the local hospital then, with permission, information is shared with Social Work and CAMHS, an assessment visit takes place and further advice offered. The Named Person within the Education Establishment is informed and support can be provided. Leaflets have been produced to share with parents and carers, conversation guidance to support education staff when a young person returns to school has been developed and utilised.

Should a death by suicide of a young person occur a multi-agency crisis response is enacted, led by Local Government officers, ensuring all stakeholders are provided with support. This includes (but is not limited to) Bereavement Support information sessions for parents/carers of young people who may be struggling and identification of key friends and young people who may be more vulnerable to concerns following a death by suicide who are offered additional targeted supports and wellbeing check-ins.

Focus: Social Work

Professions across Local Government have opportunities to support mental health and wellbeing. One with a key role is social work. Social workers bring a social ecological perspective to the concept of mental health, working with colleagues from across health, police, the third sector, and others, to provide an effective, holistic service for individuals, families, and communities. Social workers empower people who use services and protect and promote individual Human Rights, as per the Human Rights Act 1998. Social workers play a significant role in supporting people living with mental illness enabling those with complex needs, including those with forensic mental health involvement, to live as independently as possible in the community whether a formal diagnosis is in place or not.

Mental Health Officers (MHOs) are specially trained social workers who, following a period of specialist training, undertake this statutory role. MHOs have a unique role in supporting and protecting people who are vulnerable because of a mental disorder. At times when a person requires care, treatment and/or detention under the Mental Health (Care & Treatment) (Scotland) Act, the local authority must ensure that an MHO is appointed to work with the individual. Generally speaking, the MHO's role includes protecting the individual's health, safety, welfare, finances, and property and:

- **Safeguarding the individual's rights and freedom**
- **Public protection where this concerns mentally ill offenders**
- **Letting the Mental Welfare Commission and the individual's Named Person know if the person has been detained or where an application is being made for the individual to be placed on a Compulsory Treatment Order.**

Although MHOs work alongside medical and legal professionals, they work and carry out their responsibilities independently. MHOs also have specific statutory responsibilities for reporting to the courts in relation to certain parts of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000, such as applications for Intervention or Guardianship Orders.

Provide

Local authorities 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.

Local authorities provide a range of direct mental health and wellbeing support for people requiring early intervention or further support with their mental health but who do not require the support of specialist provision within health services, though local authority support may also be provided alongside this. Whilst need may not meet clinical criteria it can be significant, including but not limited to trauma, bereavement, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, distress, body image and eating issues for example. Individuals needing such support often also have other needs to consider, housing or employability for instance. Examples of direct mental health support provided by local authorities include:



School Counselling

Access to counselling through schools is in place across Scotland for school age children aged 10 and over. This service supports a significant number of children and young people with 14,290 children and young people recorded as having accessed counselling services between January and June 2023.

Scotland



Community Based Supports and Services for Children and Young People

Local Government provide a range of community-based supports and services aligned to the [Children and Young People- Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Supports and Services Framework](#). These range from services from a very early stage, acting on the social determinants of health, and across the continuum of support children and young people may require. Many of the interventions seek to identify and work with those in need of support around their mental health and wellbeing at an 'early stage', addressing issues such as self-esteem and resilience, as well as providing support for those less likely to access traditional mental health services.

Other examples involve the development of skills and networks required to support mental health and wellbeing rather than providing support through more formal mental health interventions. Some young people require more directed /formal mental health and wellbeing support in community settings and local authorities have put a variety of supports in place to address this.

These services supported 58,281 between January and June 2023 (up from 45,523 in the previous six months), 5373 of whom were family members and carers.

Some examples of support aligned to the framework are provided in this document.

Local Government



Digital Mental Health Support

Glasgow City Council has commissioned online mental health support services through **Kooth** for 10 to 16-year-olds and **Togetherall** for 16 to 23-year-olds. These online platforms are clinically supervised and provide 24/7 support for young people seeking assistance. They are free to access for residents living within Glasgow within the specified age ranges.

Between November 2023 to November 2024, 170 new young people registered for Togetherall services with 153 active users logging in over 750 times. 66% of Glasgow members say Togetherall is their only source of support, and 77 individuals received private support from Togetherall clinician professionals. 80% of users joined due to feeling down or depressed, 67% nervous or on edge, 63% due to stress and 63% had unwanted thoughts. Glasgow HSCP and GCC Education Services are continuing to work with Togetherall to promote the service widely, particularly within educational settings and GP practices.

Glasgow



Living Life to the Full

Commonly occurring reasons for seeking help include stress, anxiety, and low mood. After identifying this need locally, **North Lanarkshire Council** have established '**Living life to the full**'. This is an evidence-based programme, using low intensity cognitive behavioural therapy which helps young people develop life skills, understand experiences, and develop positive coping strategies.

This is available via both self and professional referral and the programme is well evaluated by young people and develops in line with need.

North Lanarkshire



Single Point of Access

East Lothian Council has created an additional level of support and intervention for mental health and wellbeing through the creation of a **Single Point of Access** for some children and young people where specific need has been identified through the Child's Planning process.

- The Single Point of Access (SPA) offers a simple way to access a number of services who support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people such as counselling, bereavement support, art therapy and mental health youth work.
- Requests for Assistance (RfA) sent to the SPA by professionals, are discussed at a meeting with a range of professionals (known as the Triage Team) who will offer advice, support and interventions.

Through this approach, staff are able to select the most appropriate service from a suite of options including counselling, wellbeing support, art therapy, group work, and support from young people's mental health youth workers.

Relatedly, East Lothian has developed a team of **The Mental Health Youth Workers** (MHYW) who are based in schools. The team aim to raise awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing. A MHYW coordinates, and signposts pupils to both universal and targeted support, as well as delivering targeted interventions to pupils requiring additional support.

From promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing to provision of direct mental health support Local Government have a wide range of opportunities, and are undertaking significant work to support and improve the wellbeing of our communities.

