

NHS Ayrshire & Arran



Meeting:	Ayrshire and Arran Board
Meeting date:	Monday 08 December 2025
Title:	Ayrshire and Arran People Strategy 2025–2030 and supporting frameworks
Responsible Director:	Sarah Leslie, Director of People, Safety and Culture
Report Author:	Caroline Cooksey, HR Consultant

1. Purpose

This is presented to the Board for:

- Decision

This paper relates to:

- Annual Operational Plan
- Government policy/directive
- Local policy

This aligns to the following NHSScotland quality ambition(s):

- Safe
- Effective
- Person Centred

2. Report summary

2.1 Situation

The Director of People, Safety and Culture has led the development of a new People Strategy for 2025–2030, underpinned by 3 framework documents which set actions for improvement and delivery over the next 3 years in relation to Organisational Culture, Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing along side the extant Workforce Plan.

This paper presents the draft People Strategy – People, Safety and Culture Matters 2025–2030, together with the draft Culture Framework and Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework and Action Plan 2025–2028 for Board Members to review, discuss and agree to progress.

2.2 Background

The extant People Strategy timeline completed in April 2025. The People, Safety and Culture Directorate team have now developed a refreshed strategy for 2025–2030, which will be underpinned by three key enabling documents, namely an Organisational

Culture Framework, a Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework and a Workforce Plan.

The draft People Strategy presented today takes cognisance of both the vision and plan set out in the National Workforce Strategy (2022) and the specific needs of the Ayrshire and Arran workforce and wider organisation.

The draft Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing framework and action plan is a collaborative framework drawing together contributions from subject matter experts and leaders from a range of services and sets out the whole organisations' ambitions, skills and capacity in relation to staff health, safety and wellbeing. It takes cognisance of the NHS Scotland / COSLA Health and Social Care – Improving Wellbeing and Workforce Cultures national plan 2024.

The Organisational Culture Framework is a strategic enabler of the Ayrshire and Arran People's Strategy 2025–2030. It responds to recent systemic challenges, such as the pandemic, cost-of-living crisis, and workforce pressures, by reaffirming the organisation's commitment to staff wellbeing and cultural transformation.

The Boards extant workforce plan covers the period 2022–2025, and a revised plan will be developed and presented to Board in 2026 in accordance with the aims set out in the People Strategy and any refreshed Scottish Government directions received.

2.3 Assessment

The People Strategy 2025–2030 and supporting framework documents relating to Culture, Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing and the extant Workforce Plan set out the Organisation's aims and ambitions for the workforce over the next 5 years. The strategy and supporting framework plans support organisational leadership and vision, governance and accountability and performance management of leaders, teams and the system, and will support the effective use of resources, enhance workforce equality and organisational sustainability on delivery.

The People Strategy and underpinning framework documents are critical to the organisation. They to set the vision for the next 5 years in relation to the Organisation's workforce, direct the work plans and utilisation of resources of the People, Safety and Culture Directorate and will inform the performance metrics appropriate for all leaders and staff across the organisation in relation to their individual and team People Management practices.

2.3.1 Quality/patient care

Research evidences that a positive staff experience enhances quality of patient care and experience of accessing and receiving treatment from Health and Care services. There are no negative impacts identified

2.3.2 Workforce

The strategy and underpinning framework documents will deliver action over the next 5 years which will improve staff experience, and staff health, safety and wellbeing and thus should have a positive impact across the whole workforce. There are no negative impacts identified.

2.3.3 Financial

The actions in the strategy and framework documents are planned to be delivered within existing organisational resources unless specified otherwise. Where additional resources will be required, this has been identified within the plan with actions noted being dependent on funding being secured. Actions within the plan aim to optimise efficiency and productivity across the workforce in various areas such as management of avoidable sickness absence, improved recruitment levels and speed of recruitment and reductions in escalating (and costly) Employee Relations cases through improved organisational culture, managerial support and capability at team level and increase early resolution.

2.3.4 Risk assessment/management

The strategy and underpinning frameworks have been informed by national guidance and policy, legislation, audit findings and assessment of organisational risks, as set out in the context of the strategy. The strategy and underpinning frameworks service to focus action on identified areas of organisational risk and take actions which will best service to mitigate the risks at individual, team and organisational levels.

2.3.5 Equality and diversity, including health inequalities

An impact assessment was completed for the People Strategy and underpinning framework documents on Thursday 28th August. The EQIA evidences the positive impact that the Strategy will have on multiple equalities dimensions, which in turn supports our Public Sector Equality Duty, the Fairer Scotland Duty, and the Board's Equalities Outcomes.

2.3.6 Other impacts

- Best Value - this report relates to the following Best Value themes

• Vision and Leadership	X
• Effective Partnerships	
• Governance and accountability	X
• Use of resources	X
• Performance management	X
• Sustainability (cross-cutting)	X
• Equality (cross-cutting - see 2.3.5)	X

- Corporate Objectives - the Strategy is aligned to and will support achievement of the organisation's Corporate Objectives.

2.3.7 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation regarding the strategy and frameworks is ongoing.

Initial engagement was undertaken over the summer of 2025 with Directorate management and senior teams to inform the drafting of the strategy and plans. The strategy and underpinning frameworks have been developed by teams of relevant subject matter experts, with staff side representation on the drafting team for the health, safety and wellbeing framework.

CMT review and feedback on the draft Strategy and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework was sought at the meeting on 9th September.

Following CMT review the draft was consulted on during September and October with the Employee Director, Staff Side and Trades Unions via the Area Partnership Forum, and with Directorate Management Teams via scheduled SMT meetings. Staff Governance Committee members were consulted on the draft in the same timeframe in advance of formal receipt of the strategy and underpinning frameworks for approval at their meeting in November 2025.

2.3.8 Route to the meeting

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report.

- Corporate Management Team, 24 September 2025
- Area Partnership Forum, 29 September 2025
- Staff Governance Committee, 04 November 2025

2.4 Recommendation

For decision. NHS Board Members are asked to consider and approve the draft Strategy and Frameworks which will thereafter be issued to the wider organisation once they have been through final design with the graphics team.

3. List of appendices

The following appendices are included with this report:

- Appendix 1 – Draft People Strategy – People, Safety and Culture Matters 2025-2030
- Appendix 2 – Draft Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework 2025-2028
- Appendix 3 – Draft Culture Framework 2025-2028



NHS Ayrshire & Arran People Strategy

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Foreword

Over the past five years, NHS Ayrshire & Arran has navigated extraordinary challenges – from the COVID-19 pandemic to financial pressures and rising service demands. These events have tested our systems and deeply affected the wellbeing of our workforce. In response, we've recognised that culture must be central to how we lead, connect, and care.

Our 2025–30 People Strategy – People, Safety and Culture Matters is rooted in the belief that a thriving culture is essential for wellbeing, performance, and innovation. It builds on national frameworks and local values, placing people at the heart of our vision for the future. We are committed to creating psychologically safe, inclusive environments where compassion and continuous learning are part of everyday life.



This strategy outlines how we will plan, attract, employ, retain, develop, and support our workforce, while embracing digital transformation and new care models. It acknowledges the complex challenges we face, including staffing shortages, an ageing workforce, and rising mental health concerns, and sets out clear objectives to address them.

Together, we can shape a culture where people feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive. This is our opportunity to re-imagine NHS Ayrshire & Arran as a place where people grow, contribute, and find meaning in their work.

Professor Gordon James, Chief Executive



Opening statement

Our People Strategy – People Matter was first published in 2015, setting four objectives: to retain, develop, support, and attract the right people to NHS Ayrshire & Arran. This was aligned with our pillars of People, Quality, Service, and Finance.

Since launching our 2020–25 strategy, we've faced the profound impacts of the global pandemic and financial crisis. These experiences shaped the **National Workforce Strategy (2022)**, which introduced five pillars: Plan, Attract, Train, Employ, and Nurture, with a strong emphasis on organisational culture and psychological safety, and validating our ongoing work in these areas.

From 2022, we refocused on core people management and Staff Governance commitments, including PDR uptake, statutory training, new roles like Band 4 Nursing Practitioners, international recruitment, and staff wellbeing. A key achievement has been the expansion of wellbeing support through collaborative efforts.

Our 2025–30 People Strategy – People, Safety and Culture Matters builds on past progress and lessons learned, guided by the national framework. Despite ongoing financial and workforce pressures, our ambition remains: to foster an engaged, empowered, and resilient workforce within a culture of appreciation, fulfilment, and health.



This third strategic review introduces frameworks for Culture and Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and explores opportunities in digital transformation and AI to enhance work experiences and service delivery.

Delivered in partnership with our leaders, Area Partnership Forum, and trade union, we remain committed to building a thriving workforce for our citizens, collaborating locally, regionally, and nationally to share, learn, and improve together.

Sarah Leslie, Director of People, Safety and Culture

**“Our ambition remains:
to foster an engaged,
empowered, and resilient
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of appreciation, fulfilment,
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Introduction

Over the past five years, Scotland's health and social care system, as well as in Ayrshire and Arran, has faced immense challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, financial pressures, and rising service demands. These have impacted both organisational operations and individual wellbeing.

Culture needs to be at the heart of our response. It shapes how we work, connect, and lead. We view a thriving culture as essential not only for wellbeing but also for performance, innovation, and sustainability. As we adopt new care models, embrace digital transformation, and integrate a global workforce, we nurture curiosity, adaptability, and continuous learning. We need to create environments where psychological safety, compassion, and inclusion are part of everyday life.

We must prioritise relational leadership, strengthen team cohesion, and foster a shared sense of purpose. Our leaders should be equipped to lead with empathy, hold space for honest conversations, and model the behaviours we want to see.

Ultimately, we shape our culture, and in doing so, we shape how people experience change. When we get culture right, it becomes our strength. Together, we can reimagine NHS Ayrshire & Arran as a place where people grow, contribute, and find meaning in their work.

Visit [xxx](#) to see for more information on our organisation, as well as our corporate objectives.

Our context

Like all health and care systems, we continue to face significant, complex, and long-standing challenges deeply embedded in our systems, processes, and organisational culture. With changing demographics and evolving local and national contexts, health and social care integration requires our systems to work together in more connected and seamless ways than before.

Our People Strategy and supporting delivery frameworks for workforce planning, health, safety, wellbeing and culture development, are firmly aligned with the [National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Scotland](#) and the national [Health and Social Care Improving Wellbeing and Working Cultures framework \(2024\)](#). Locally, this plan is anchored by our Board Purpose, commitments, and values of caring, safe and respectful.

We place people, safety, and culture at the centre of our strategy. Our People Strategy – People, Safety and Culture Matters outlines our vision to 2030 and provides a framework for:

- delivering the Staff Governance Standards;
- strategic workforce planning;
- improving staff health, safety, and wellbeing (2025–28);
- developing organisational culture (2025–28); and
- implementing and monitoring iMatter.

Our workforce challenges

Looking ahead to 2030 and beyond, we continue to face several challenges:

- **Staffing shortages:** We continue to struggle with recruiting key staff and specialists. Brexit disrupted European supply chains, prompting us to explore global recruitment and alternative pathways to grow talent from within.
- **Ageing workforce:** Our workforce mirrors our ageing population, with an average age of 46. Retirement patterns remain unpredictable due to pension changes and personal responsibilities, including multi-generational caregiving.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Staff wellbeing remains below our aspirations. Sickness absence is high, and mental health concerns, including stress, anxiety, trauma, and burnout, have risen sharply since the pandemic.
- **Changing demands:** Staff face growing pressure to adapt to evolving service models and financial constraints. While change offers opportunities, maintaining services during transition strains both staff and leaders.
- **Digital transformation:** Rapid growth in digital technology and AI demands new skills and mindsets. Improving digital literacy and encouraging adoption of tech-enabled care models is vital for future productivity and accessibility.

People, safety and culture matters: Our aim

Our aim is to foster a workforce that is engaged, empowered, and enabled within a culture that is open, fair, compassionate, and inclusive. We want every staff member to feel respected, valued, and supported to reach their full potential and deliver excellence at individual, team, and organisational levels. Together, we aim to build a workplace where people feel appreciated, fulfilled, healthy, and resilient.

This strategy outlines four core objectives to strengthen how we plan, attract, employ, retain, develop, and support our workforce. Effective people management is built on strong foundations—clear roles, evidence-based practices, consistent delivery, and continuous improvement through collaboration and feedback.

Our core people objectives are to:

1. **Plan and attract:** Ensure the right people are in the right roles at the right time, aligned with our values and vision.
2. **Employ and retain:** Create a fair, inclusive environment where diversity is valued, roles are clear, and staff live our values.
3. **Train and develop:** Be recognised as an exemplar employer that invests in people, supports growth, and promotes lifelong learning and career development.
4. **Nurture and support:** Build a positive, compassionate culture that prioritises wellbeing, safety, and enables staff to thrive and perform at their best.

Our objectives

Objective 1: Plan and attract

We aim to have the right people, in the right roles, at the right time, and who share our organisational values and vision.

To achieve this, we must ensure that our workforce planning clearly articulates the staff we need and why we need them. Our Anti Racism, Employability and Recruitment Plans provide the mechanisms to support delivery. We are committed to being a diverse and inclusive employer, representative of our communities and recognised for promoting equality in employment.

As the largest employer in Ayrshire and Arran, we have a responsibility to address local unemployment and deprivation. Our Employability Plan will expand access to NHS careers, especially for those furthest from the workplace, through placements, apprenticeships, and partnerships.

We also aim to shift perceptions of NHS careers, highlighting non-clinical roles and flexible career paths, including “earn while you learn” opportunities.

In a competitive labour market, especially for clinical roles, our Recruitment Plan will strengthen our employer brand, improve candidate experience, and enhance retention, making Ayrshire & Arran an employer of choice.

Our current Workforce Plan (2022–25) is under review, with a refreshed version due in 2026.

Commitments working to 2030 and beyond

We will:

- Develop the Workforce Plan 2026–29 to identify future staffing needs and demographics.
- Refresh the Recruitment Plan to improve branding, effectiveness, and retention.
- Launch a new Employability Plan to expand entry routes and partnerships.

Impact measures

- Meet the 12-week NHSScotland recruitment standard.
- Maintain 75 per cent of employability participants gaining substantive roles.
- Increase apprenticeships beyond the five-year average of 25 each year.
- Reduce non-disclosure of protected characteristics in recruitment.
- Ensure 80 per cent of recruiting managers complete unconscious bias training.
- Lower turnover to pre-pandemic levels (6.4 per cent).

Objective 2: Employ and retain

We want all staff to feel fairly treated throughout their career, in a diverse, values-led environment with clear roles and responsibilities. By fostering a culture of care, learning, and consistency, we want our people to feel engaged, empowered, and proud of their work.

Our ambition is to be an exemplar employer – trusted, inclusive, and focussed on growth – where staff thrive and contribute to a shared purpose. We will work in partnership with our trade union and professional organisations to ensure fairness in job evaluation, consistent application of terms and conditions, and effective workforce policies.

Commitments working to 2030 and beyond

We will:

- Redesign Employee Relations team into Business Partners for enhanced manager support.
- Improve staff engagement in change and reform.
- Strengthen feedback mechanisms on employment experience.
- Embed values and behaviours across all teams.
- Deliver responsive management development and training.
- Design roles that support longer, healthier working lives.
- Promote Whistleblowing standards and a just culture.
- Provide job evaluation and job description training.
- Enhance access to workforce policies and FAQs via intranet.
- Monitor and improve consistency in terms and conditions.
- Support managers in applying the promoting attendance policy.

Impact measures

- Reduced absence rates (target of 5.15 per cent).
- Fewer formal employee relations cases, with earlier resolutions.
- Improved performance against Staff Governance Standards.
- Increased uptake and application of people management training.
- Better policy and terms and condition compliance through audits.
- Fewer Stage 1 quality checks and job description returns.
- Easier access to workforce policies and guidance.

Objective 3: Train and develop

We want to be known as an exemplar anchor employer, recognised for the importance we place on developing our people, and encouraging them to be the best that they can be, maximising their learning, digital capability and career opportunities through ongoing professional and personal development.

Anchor employers, such as the NHS and local authorities, have a significant and lasting presence in their communities. They use their power through spending, employment, and assets, to build a fairer, healthier, and more resilient economy.

Succession planning is central to driving cultural change and long-term sustainability, supported by inclusive workforce development, leadership programmes, and platforms like Turas and LearnPro to enable career progression and system-wide growth. By embedding national frameworks, expanding vocational pathways, and evolving Performance Development Reviews into meaningful conversations, we will build NHS Ayrshire & Arran as a learning organisation where staff are empowered to grow, lead, and innovate.

Commitments working to 2030 and beyond

We will:

- Highlight local and national programmes in place, including coaching , mentoring, and 360° feedback to improve leadership confidence.
- Be an exemplar anchor employer, growing our people and working with partners to create shared opportunities for development and digital innovation.
- Demonstrate use of platforms like Turas and LearnPro for leadership development and succession tracking.
- Support new staff to complete MAST within two weeks of joining
- Share twice-yearly compliance reports and risk reviews with governance groups
- Establish a clear governance structure to oversee MAST implementation, aligned with national frameworks and local workforce priorities.
- Embed the MAST passport into existing learning systems such as Turas and LearnPro, ensuring seamless access and tracking for staff.
- Refresh corporate and local induction processes
- Track uptake in local, regional and national leadership programmes across all staff level.
- Grow vocational learning pathways in key areas, for instance, Healthcare Support Workers.
- Develop digital learning resources to support personal and professional development.

Impact measures

- Create a senior leader succession plan for the organisation.
- Improve access to development, digital tools and collaborative opportunities through anchor partnerships.
- Increase compliance with mandatory and statutory training requirements by three per cent year on year (2025 baseline of 79 per cent), subject to national guidance, and role specific MAST compliance in line with national guidance.
- Use the national MAST Passport to reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and strengthen training accountability through effective use of existing data systems.
- Increase Personal Development Review (PDR) completion of 60 per cent, with a stretch target of 80 per cent.
- Improve the quality of our induction experience for new starts by measured qualitative feedback.
- Increase levels of iMatter engagement and action planning to meet national targets.
- Percentage of teams demonstrating digital-first approach in workflows, service design or decision-making as shown by tool adoption, automation or staff feedback.

Objective 4 - Nurture and support

We aim to foster a compassionate, inclusive culture where staff feel supported, safe, and able to thrive. Recognising the complexity of their roles, we are committed to improving physical and mental wellbeing, safety, and overall work experience.

Guided by the Scottish Government's vision, our Culture Framework puts people at the heart of everything we do. You can find the link to our Culture framework [here](#). The framework sets out our commitments working to 2028 and beyond and describes the impact our actions will have for our staff and the wider organisation

To ensure our values, Caring, Safe, and Respectful, are embedded in daily practice, we will assess how they are experienced across the organisation through a system-wide questionnaire. Insights will inform leadership development, succession planning, and strengthen the link between values, behaviours, and performance.

We take a whole-system approach to creating psychologically safe, equitable, and learning-focused environments. This work is supported by two key frameworks - Culture, and Staff Health, Safety & Wellbeing (2025–28) - which outline the actions we'll take to improve workforce wellbeing and organisational culture over the next five years.

Our Culture framework focusses on five pillars, which are the cornerstones of our culture and the key drivers of transformation across NHS Ayrshire & Arran.



- 1. Supportive leadership:** We will equip staff with the skills and confidence to lead with compassion through reflective practice, development programmes, and succession planning. We will measure this through training rates, iMatter data, PDR completion, and leadership feedback.



- 2. Equity and diversity:** We will eliminate inequalities and foster inclusion through data analysis, bias training, mentoring, and inclusive recruitment. We will measure this through training uptake, survey feedback, workforce demographics, and RACE equity markers.



- 3. Just and open:** We will promote trust and continuous improvement through respectful communication, Speak Up Advocates, and learning reviews. We will measure this through employee relations metrics, mediation use, iMatter feedback, and reporting of concerns.



- 4. Mental health and wellbeing:** We will embed wellbeing into daily practice with trauma-informed training, psychological safety, and proactive learning. We will measure this through survey data, resource usage, absence trends, and flexible working uptake.



- 5. Using resources effectively:** We will support managers to lead inclusively and manage resources sustainably through training, digital tools, and performance reviews. We will measure this through training evaluations, digital tool usage, PDR rates, survey indicators, and sickness absence trends.

Our Health, Safety and Wellbeing framework will cover five domains:



1. Financial and anchor: As the region's largest employer, we have a unique opportunity to influence financial wellbeing across our workforce and community. Through the three-year Anchor/Community Wealth Building Strategy and our staff financial wellbeing programmes, we will continue to provide education, training, and support.



2. Environmental and nature: We will promote health and wellbeing by supporting active travel, sustainable transport, and access to green spaces, in line with the NHS Ayrshire & Arran Climate Change and Sustainability Framework (2021–2032).



3. Emotional and spiritual wellbeing: Recognising the impact of workplace experiences on emotional and spiritual wellbeing, we will address stress, burnout, trauma, absenteeism, and presenteeism by fostering psychological safety and compassionate leadership.



4. Health and safety at work: Protecting staff health and safety is both a legal and moral duty. Our three-year Health and Safety Plan will drive continuous improvement through a balanced, practical approach.



5. Physical health and lifestyle: We will support physical health and lifestyle choices through targeted interventions that reflect workforce demographics and risks. By promoting healthy behaviours, our staff can also serve as role models for patients, families, and the wider community.

Throughout the 2025–28 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework, we will collect and analyse anonymised data from planned interventions to inform a comprehensive workforce health needs assessment. This evidence will guide the design of the 2028–31 framework, ensuring future interventions are targeted for maximum impact and support.

The framework will set out our commitments working to 2028 and beyond and will describe the impact our actions will have for our staff and the wider organisation.

Technological innovation and enhanced digital capability

To achieve our workforce ambitions, we must embrace technological innovation, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to improve efficiency and sustainability. Success depends on a digitally ready culture, role redesign, and user-friendly systems.

We'll learn from NHSScotland examples, share best practices, and explore opportunities to enhance digital capability across workforce, systems, and processes, aligned with People objectives and future investment plans.

Conclusion

NHS Ayrshire & Arran has made strong progress on the People agenda. In response to the pandemic and financial pressures, we are now prioritising organisational culture, staff safety, and wellbeing over the next five years.

Our 2025–30 strategy focuses on creating a workplace where staff feel engaged, empowered, and supported to deliver their best. The four workforce ambitions provide a balanced framework for action, supporting digital transformation and enhancing every stage of the employee journey. Together, these objectives will shape the staff experience and strengthen our organisation.

Equality Impact Assessment

This Strategy has been subject to NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Equality Impact Assessment process, and the final document will be published on our public website.

Governance and accountability

Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board, through the Staff Governance Committee, is responsible for approving this strategy and overseeing its implementation and evaluation.

The Director for People, Safety and Culture is accountable to the Board for delivering the People Strategy. The People, Safety and culture Directorate will lead the delivery and provide guidance to leaders and managers to ensure safe, effective and compassionate people practices, in line with this strategy, directorate guidance and relevant policies and legislation.

Leaders and managers are responsible for ensuring safe, effective, and compassionate people practices, in line with this strategy, directorate guidance, and relevant policies and legislation.

All staff share responsibility for their own wellbeing, development, and behaviours at work, contributing to the culture and performance of NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

The Chief Executive, Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board, and the Executive Management Team will provide oversight and support. A successful People Strategy will create a clear framework for how NHS Ayrshire & Arran attracts, develops, supports, and retains its workforce while fostering a positive culture.

Progress on the implementation of this strategy will be reported annually.

For more information

If you require further information, please contact

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Staff health, safety and wellbeing framework 2025-2028

Draft v3

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Foreword from the Chief Executive and Employee Director

Staff health safety and wellbeing framework

Health, safety and wellbeing are central to our commitment to nurture and support our workforce as outlined in NHS Ayrshire & Arran's People Strategy 2025–2030. This Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework will guide our efforts over the next three years to 2028.

Our organisation has a strong legacy of supporting staff wellbeing, from our investment in Occupational Health and Safety services to pioneering approaches in spiritual care. Yet, recent challenges, including the pandemic and economic pressures, have exposed deep-rooted inequalities and evolving needs across our workforce.

This framework responds to those realities. It draws on national strategies, staff feedback, and expert insight to refocus our approach. By fostering collaboration across disciplines and embedding trauma-informed practices, we aim to create a workplace where every individual feels safe, supported and empowered.

The framework unites existing and new initiatives into a coordinated, system-wide programme. It will help us track progress, adapt to emerging needs, and shape future investment in staff wellbeing. I look forward to working with colleagues to realise its vision and to seeing the positive impact it will have on our people and the care we provide across Ayrshire and Arran.

Opening statement from Sarah Leslie, Director of People, Safety and Culture

Health, safety and wellbeing are critical components of the nurture and support objective of our people strategy for NHS Ayrshire & Arran. I am, therefore, delighted to lead our first staff health, safety and wellbeing framework, which will direct our work over the next three years up to 2028.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran has a long history of supporting the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff, with longstanding investment in our Occupational Health and Safety services, and early pioneering work around spiritual and wellbeing care.

However, the pandemic and national financial crisis have highlighted existing health inequalities and revealed new wellbeing needs across our workforce and region. At the same time, evidence from reports like the National Workforce Strategy 2022, Scotland's Population Health Framework 2025–35, and Health and Social Care: Improving Wellbeing and Working Cultures 2024, along with staff feedback and audits, show that coordinated support for staff health, safety, and wellbeing is more critical than ever.

To respond, we must refocus our approach. Experts across psychology, spiritual care, occupational health and safety, organisation development and staff wellbeing must work more closely with staff and staff side trades unions. Support must be trauma-informed and help staff navigate our 'new normal' workplace environment and sustainable and effective services to those living in Ayrshire and Arran.

This framework will guide our efforts over the next three years, uniting current and new initiatives into a coordinated, system-wide programme. It will help us monitor progress, learn and shape future investment in staff wellbeing. I look forward to working together and seeing the positive impact this will have on our working lives.

Introduction

Within NHS Ayrshire & Arran, we are proud of our long-standing role as a caring public sector employer. People are at the heart of everything we do – those we care for and those who deliver that care, including our staff and volunteers.

Every member of staff makes a difference every day, whether through a kind word or compassionate care throughout a patient's journey.

This ethos has shaped our People Strategy 2025-2030: People, safety and culture Matters. This strategy focuses on four key aims: to plan and attract, employ and retain, train and develop, and support and nurture our workforce. It places staff health, safety, and wellbeing at the centre of our future.

Our People Strategy sets out a clear commitment to nurture and support our workforce, recognising that staff health, safety and wellbeing are essential to a thriving organisation. This Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework 2025-2028 outlines the conditions and improvements needed to ensure our people continue to experience a safe, supportive, and fulfilling place to work.

We are committed to supporting our workforce's physical and mental wellbeing throughout their careers, fostering an inclusive, compassionate culture where everyone is valued and respected.

Our vision

We want a positive, compassionate culture where all staff feel valued, supported, and able to thrive. We aim to better understand and meet the physical, mental health, wellbeing, and safety needs of our workforce, recognising the complex challenges they face in caring for our population.

The Scottish Government's 2024 vision for Improving Wellbeing and Workplace Cultures (IWWC) sets clear standards for individuals, teams, leaders, and organisations. It highlights the need for:

“Delivered improvements in workforce planning, attraction, training, employment and wellbeing, progressing towards a sustainable, skilled health and care workforce, with attractive career choices, where all are respected and valued for the work they do.”

Our Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework sets out how we will bring our vision to life by driving improvements that support the health, safety and wellbeing of our people. It directly underpins the delivery of our People Strategy 2025-2030 and reinforces our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive and supportive workplace. Alongside this, we have developed a separate Culture Framework 2025-2028, which outlines the cultural shifts and improvements we will pursue over the next three years to strengthen organisational values and behaviours.

Our context

Workplace health, safety and wellbeing is shaped by many interlinked factors – physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, financial, and environmental. What affects one area of life often impacts others, both at work and beyond. NHS Ayrshire & Arran supports a balanced work-life approach, and our framework takes a holistic view, recognising the diverse needs and experiences of our staff.

Health is influenced by key “building blocks” like education, employment, environment, and access to quality services. People with more resources – such as knowledge, income, and networks – tend to have better health outcomes. Within our workforce, there’s a wide income range, and research shows lower-paid staff often face greater health challenges.

To address this, our health initiatives must be proportionate to need, offering universal support while targeting additional help where it’s most needed. This includes tackling barriers like:

- cost (including hidden costs);
- stigma;
- physical and cultural accessibility; and
- discrimination.

The past five years have been extremely challenging for health and social care across Scotland. While recovering from COVID-19, we’ve also faced rising demand, increasing costs, and global financial pressures. In NHS Ayrshire & Arran, these challenges have impacted both our organisation and individual wellbeing.

Stress, anxiety, and burnout have increased. Sickness absence remains above the four per cent national target, and presenteeism is affecting staff health and team resilience.

An ageing workforce brings added challenges, including more chronic and musculoskeletal conditions, and health issues linked to menopause, diabetes, and cancer. Many staff also manage multi-generational caring roles, which can strain finances, reduce resilience, and increase social isolation, further affecting health, safety, and wellbeing at work.

Our responsibilities

Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board, through the Staff Governance Committee, has responsibility for approving this framework and monitoring implementation and evaluation.

The Director for People, Safety and Culture is accountable to the Board for the implementation of this framework

The People, Safety and Culture Directorate team are responsible for the development of the framework and coordinating input from colleagues and departments named in the action plan. All planned actions will be delivered using trauma-informed practices across the organisation.

Subject matter experts are responsible for advising leaders and managers on legislation and best practices, ensuring alignment with this framework's aims.

Leaders and managers are responsible for delivering safe, effective, and compassionate health, safety, and wellbeing practices. They must apply trauma-informed principles within their teams, guided by subject matter experts, this framework, and relevant local and national policies, directives, and legislation.

All staff are responsible for their own health, safety, wellbeing, development and behaviours at work and the resultant contribution each makes to the health, safety, wellbeing and culture within and performance of NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

Our framework for action and improvement

Our action and improvement framework identifies five domains that define the focus and support needed to enhance staff health, safety, and wellbeing across individual, team, and organisational levels, reflecting our workforce profile and working context.

1. Financial and anchor
2. Environmental and nature
3. Emotional and spiritual wellbeing
4. Health and safety at work
5. Physical health and lifestyle

Through implementing this framework, we will build a coordinated data set to inform a health needs assessment, enhancing our understanding and enabling more targeted, system-wide health, safety and wellbeing planning.

In the following chapters we have set out what each domain covers; why it's important; and what we will do to change and improve over the next three years to 2028.

1. Financial and anchor

Our three year Anchor / Community Wealth Building (CWB) strategy sets out our ambition along with our Ayrshire Anchor partners to support creation of a fair Ayrshire wellbeing economy which:

- enhances local wealth;
- reduces poverty and inequality through investing and spending locally;
- creating fair and meaningful employment;
- guides design and management of our buildings, land and assets to maximise local and community benefits; and
- reduces our environmental impact.

Meeting our anchor responsibilities by implementing community wealth building is not a short term project or additional one-off programme of work, rather it is a long-term intention by the Board to use its assets and resources to do what we already do: employ people, buy goods and services, manage our land, buildings and the environment and form partnerships.

Employment is a significant social determinant of health, influencing both physical and mental well-being. As an employer, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, like all NHS Boards, pays above the real living wage. We also hold accreditation for Care Positive; Disability confident, Equally Safe at Work and the Defence Employer Scheme.

Our ambition with regard to employability is set out in the People Strategy and our intent is to develop a new Employability Plan to support those, some of whom may be far from the workplace, with routes into the workplace, and also support existing staff who may wish to develop their career further.

We recognise the challenging economic climate and its impact on our staff's wellbeing. By addressing in-work poverty through holistic wellbeing and financial inclusion, we can help improve overall staff health. Promoting financial wellbeing and providing access to information and support services will empower staff to manage financial challenges and help to reduce the mental and physical health impacts of money-related stress.

Financial wellbeing affects not only our staff but also their families and communities. Supporting staff to meet basic needs helps reduce long-term health risks and promotes overall wellbeing across the life course.

Over the next three years, we will:

- develop our employability plan in line with our People Strategy ambition to create routes of entry for individuals to work with NHS Ayrshire & Arran NHSA&A who may be far from employment and economically inactive;
- continue developing our staff financial wellbeing group and programme to provide support resources and build data sets that capture staff lived experiences in the current financial climate, informing future action;
- provide staff and managers with resources and training on poverty and financial wellbeing to support coping strategies and promote healthier financial decisions;
- scope a bid for Endowment Funding to support staff wellbeing and address in-work poverty; and
- strengthen our role as an anchor institution by investing in local communities, supporting inclusive economic growth, and maximising social value.

2. Environmental and nature

Active travel and sustainable transport, such as walking, cycling, and public transport, support physical and mental health, reduce costs, and improve air quality. As a large employer and responsible citizens, we must act to address the climate crisis and reduce future risks.

Exposure to green space supports physical and mental wellbeing. Nature-based activities, like walking, cycling, and outdoor play, offer proven health benefits. However, the Scotland's People and Nature Survey 2023/2024 highlights that those in poorest health are least likely to access these benefits, with inequalities and barriers to spending time outdoors still present.

Active travel and green health support the goals of NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy (2021–2032). Scotland's Population Health Framework (2025) reinforces this through key pillars such as 'Places and Communities', 'Equitable Healthcare', and a 'Prevention-focused system'.

Over the next three years, we will implement relevant actions of the Climate and Sustainability Work Programme (aligned to the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy 2021 – 2032).

3. Emotional and spiritual wellbeing

The emotional and spiritual wellbeing domain includes psychological support, spiritual care, and compassionate listening—centred on strong, supportive relationships. It focuses on prevention, early intervention, and specialist mental health care to help staff in Ayrshire and Arran maintain and improve their wellbeing.

Mental health and wellbeing is shaped by experiences across the life course, with early life and key transitions, such as pregnancy, childhood, adolescence, working life, and ageing, playing a critical role. Security of income, food, and housing are major influences, and social factors like poverty, education, and discrimination affect people differently at each stage.

Healthy, inclusive workplaces that offer fair and meaningful work, and where staff feel valued, benefit both employees and organisations. Poor mental health can lead to absenteeism and presenteeism, reducing productivity and affecting wellbeing and performance across the workforce.

Work can have a positive or negative impact on mental health. Scottish evidence suggests:

- Two in five (39 per cent) employees experience poor mental health related to work in the last year.
- The three main causes of work-related poor mental health were too much pressure; workload impacting on employees' ability to take leave; and poorly managed organisational change.
- Two out of three (64 per cent) managers had to put the interests of their organisation above staff wellbeing either sometimes, regularly or every day in the last year.
- 77 per cent of people surveyed in the See Me Scottish Mental Illness Stigma Survey reported feeling they had been treated unfairly at work.

Furthermore 87.4 per cent of people who took their own life during the time period 2012-2021 were of working age, and of these, just over two thirds (68.7 per cent) were employed at the time of their death.

The Scottish Government's Improving Wellbeing and Working Cultures document identifies wellbeing as one of three pillars of a positive workplace culture. Creating safe spaces that support staff's emotional and spiritual needs is a key organisational priority, reflecting our commitment to caring for our workforce. Staff wellbeing is closely linked to our ability to recruit and retain experienced people, which is essential for delivering high-quality care to the public.

By recognising the emotional and spiritual wellbeing of our staff, we take a holistic approach to supporting their needs. This includes addressing work-related stress and burnout and using trauma-informed practices to help mitigate the impact of past experiences on wellbeing. We also:

- demonstrate our ongoing commitment to staff wellbeing by maintaining and resourcing Staff Wellbeing Centres as safe, quiet, and protected spaces, and ensuring they are widely promoted across the organisation

- continue providing staff care and specialist interventions through a tiered approach to emotional, spiritual, and mental wellbeing, ensuring all staff referred can access the right level of support through the staff wellbeing service.

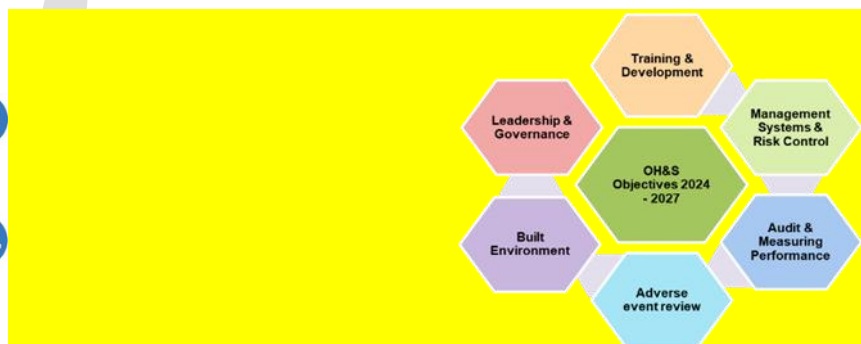
Over the next three years, we will:

- implement a suicide prevention plan for NHS Ayrshire & Arran; develop referral pathways that connect staff with specialist support services across Ayrshire and Arran, as well as nationally, to ensure access to appropriate external support when needed;
- aim to increase the provision of group reflective practice;
- create a process whereby issues which impact on staff groups can be considered, in liaison with other support services and governance groups;
- offer support and advice to managers who work in NHS and integrated staff from health and social care partnerships in identifying wellbeing concerns and how to support staff in their management role;
- contribute to training on emotional and spiritual wellbeing and mental health;
- support relational dimension of wellbeing by managing the Staff wellbeing App and Viva Engage community for staff wellbeing and organising wellness events and supporting networks; and
- develop peer support to enable NHS Ayrshire & Arran to extend the impact of emotional and spiritual care throughout the organisation.

4. Health and safety at work

We are committed to ensuring compliance with the statutory requirements of Health and Safety at work etc. Act 1974, including subject specific duties laid out in the supporting subordinate regulations. We accept that our work activities may involve risk to our staff, patients and others who enter or use our facilities.

Our three-year plan has been set in line with statutory and legislative requirements, adopting the guidelines in Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance document HSG65 “Successful Managing for Health and Safety” which promotes a “Plan, Do, Check, Act” model (image 1), under the guise of image 2;



While we recognise that we cannot remove all risk, we are committed to taking a pragmatic and proportionate approach to assure continual improvement to level of hazard and risk for all those affected by our work activity.

As well as looking at ways of ensuring a safe working environment, we must also look towards how we support the wellbeing and sustainability of our social, economic and environmental challenges.

Over the next three years, we will:

- identify and assess health and safety risks, setting priorities and resources for prevention; maintain high safety standards through targeted training, including moving and handling, violence and aggression, and risk assessment; ;
- provide assurance to key governance committees on legal compliance in managing staff health and safety;
- support safe, well-designed workplaces with proper ventilation, ergonomics, and access; and
- build on NHS Ayrshire & Arran pillars of people, safety, quality and finance by promoting flexible, hybrid working where appropriate, using both on-site and home-based settings.

5. Physical health and lifestyle

Physical inactivity is linked to preventable conditions such as cardiovascular disease, depression, dementia, and type 2 diabetes. Regular physical activity supports physical and mental health, helps maintain a healthy weight, and enhances overall wellbeing. It also promotes sustainable travel and environmental benefits through active travel choices like walking, cycling, and public transport.

Improving levels of physical activity will contribute to improving health and reducing inequalities - there are known inequalities between different groups. Women, those living in deprived areas, disabled adults, those with mental health challenges and those belonging to ethnic minority groups are less active. There are implications for those who report very low levels of physical activity as set out in The Burden of Disease Attributable to Physical Inactivity (2024) - most often older adults, people living in more deprived communities and those with disabilities or long-term conditions. The biggest impact on the burden of disease in Scotland can be achieved through a focus on removing the barriers which prevent those who currently report the lowest levels of physical activity to sustain slightly higher levels of activity.

The evidence base, and policy direction for physical activity in Scotland are well established. Supporting physical activity is a key focus within the 'Enabling Healthy Living' pillar of the Population Health Framework (2025), which emphasises the importance of active environments, such as spaces for play, walking, wheeling, and cycling, and access to supportive products and services like affordable cycles. This framework aligns with the Physical Activity for Health Framework (2024), which also prioritises active environments, policies, and opportunities. A systems-based approach to physical activity in Scotland (2022) offers a model that can be applied nationally or locally to guide future planning and implementation.

Supporting staff to be healthy and well is essential to fulfilling their roles. Promoting physical activity within the NHS Ayrshire & Arran workforce helps maintain

musculoskeletal health, supports mental wellbeing, and delivers wider benefits to their families and broader population

Over the next three years, we will apply a systems-based approach for physical activity and implement the key policy document 'Physical Activity for Health Framework'. This will include undertaking a cross-check with existing local strategic action plans to identify any gaps.

Within this domain, we also recognise the vital role of our Occupational Health team in addressing a range of factors that influence physical and mental health, as well as lifestyle, including:

- Peoples' health
- Reasonable adjustments
- Health surveillance and immunisations

Peoples' health

Busy lifestyles, career pressures, financial and caring responsibilities, and daily choices around food and activity all significantly affect physical and mental health, both at work and in the wider community. It's essential to take a holistic view of an individual's wellbeing when addressing any health or welfare concern, whether as a colleague, manager, or health professional. By identifying opportunities for signposting and using brief interventions during consultations, and with active support from managers, we aim to promote behaviour change that enhances health, wellbeing, and work capacity.

Over the next three years, we will deliver brief interventions during Occupational Health assessments, short, focused conversations between clinician and employee, to encourage behaviour change that enhances health, wellbeing, and work capacity.

Reasonable adjustments

NHS Ayrshire & Arran has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to consider reasonable adjustments that support physical and cognitive health, including neurodiversity, to promote inclusion, wellbeing, and productivity. Our managers and leaders are supported by Occupational Health experts, who assess and recommend adjustments to ensure individuals with disabilities or long-term conditions can fulfil their roles on an equal basis with others.

Over the next three years, we will provide support to staff with disability or long-term health conditions to remain in work and be able to fulfil contract of employment.

Health surveillance

We deliver health surveillance programmes, regular health checks designed to detect work-related ill health, such as conditions caused by exposure to noise or vibration. Unlike health monitoring or health promotion, health surveillance provides staff with opportunities to raise health concerns and reinforces training and education. Our Occupational Health team carries out a range of these programmes to support staff wellbeing and safety.

Over the next three years, we will:

- strengthen and expand the Staff Immunisation Programmes currently delivered by NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Occupational Health Service to enhance protection and promote workforce wellbeing; and
- continue to work collaboratively to deliver robust health surveillance programmes.

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Health needs assessment

Each of our five domains for improvement outlines how we will advance our ambition to enhance workforce health, safety, and wellbeing. However, without a strategic and interconnected approach, our evaluation and future planning may remain fragmented, reducing the overall impact of the Board's investment and the effectiveness of interventions for individuals and teams.

The implementation of this plan, supported by collaborative working, presents a unique opportunity to build an evidence base and data sets to inform a comprehensive staff health needs assessment. This will guide the development of our updated framework for 2029–31. Responsibility for delivering this process over the next three years will be shared by all Domain leads, under the leadership of the Head of Occupational Health and Safety.

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Governance and monitoring

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee will assume the responsibility for both governance of the document and monitoring the progress against the domain action plans. Each domain within the framework will be assigned to a lead officer supported by other domain contributors who will have the responsibility for taking the relevant 3-year action plans, annually, through their respective committees to obtain assurance which they will then bring to the committee. Any non-compliance / incomplete actions from those plans should be brought to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HS&W) committee complete with actions being taken to get the plans back on track.

Annual Progress taken to the Board from the HS&W committee will be through the Area Partnership Forum and Staff Governance Committee and will be the responsibility of the Director for People, Safety and Culture.

References and supporting materials

To support overall wellbeing there is a wealth of guidance in the NHS Home - National Wellbeing Hub, Public Health Scotland's Mentally Healthy Workplace and Staff Health Safety and Wellbeing pages. These pages direct employees and managers to resources, advice and links on all aspects of health, safety and wellbeing.

Locally, our Staff Health Safety and Wellbeing pages provide all staff with supporting information about health, safety and wellbeing relevant to each of our 5 health, safety and wellbeing domains.

Equality and diversity statement

The People Strategy 2025 – 30 which this framework underpins has been subject to NHS Ayrshire & Arran's Equality Impact Assessment process and the final document will be published on our public website.

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NHS Ayrshire & Arran

Culture framework

2025-2028

Draft

Contents - *page numbers to be added once finalised*

- Welcome
- Introduction
- Our Culture Framework
- Our Aims and Objectives
 - Leadership
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- Appendix

Welcome to the NHS Ayrshire & Arran Culture Framework 2025–2028.

At NHS Ayrshire & Arran, we deliver exceptional care every day. But to care for others, we must care for ourselves and each other. A positive, compassionate culture is essential to safe, high-quality care.

Recent challenges – from the pandemic to the cost-of-living crisis – have reinforced the importance of supporting our people. This framework builds on our shared values and resilience, setting out our vision and priorities for the next three years.

It reflects staff feedback, data, and the evolving context we work in. It aims to create the conditions for our people to thrive – through practical, sustainable support that strengthens wellbeing, collaboration, and innovation.

Despite ongoing pressures, we've seen inspiring teamwork, kindness, and new staff networks emerge. This momentum is our foundation. Now, we focus on shaping a healthier, more inclusive culture – one that supports our people and strengthens the care we provide.

Introduction

NHS Ayrshire & Arran's culture development journey began with the creation of our three core values: Caring, Safe, and Respectful. These values continue to reflect who we are and guide how we work, make decisions, and deliver compassionate, person-centred care across our organisation and communities. They are deeply embedded and truly owned by our workforce.

We have since adopted a strategic, organisation-wide approach to cultural development, with a focus on fostering psychological safety, where staff feel engaged, heard, included in decision-making, and valued in their roles. Managers have participated in development sessions, creating personal pledges and action plans to strengthen psychological safety within teams. This principle is now central to our leadership and organisational development programmes.

A comprehensive review of organisational culture, informed by staff feedback across all directorates and partnerships, helped shape key actions in our People Strategy. This strategy outlines our ambition to be an exemplar employer, with an ongoing commitment to cultivating a positive culture that prioritises staff health and wellbeing.

To drive this work forward, we established a cross-functional team to develop a seven-step framework that now underpins our Culture Plan. This framework supports meaningful relationships and strengthens workforce engagement, ensuring staff feel connected to our shared vision of helping citizens live their healthiest lives.

An internal audit of cultural drivers and their effectiveness, validated against staff perceptions, further informed the development of our Culture Framework, ensuring our approach remains evidence-based, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of our workforce.

Our culture framework

At NHS Ayrshire & Arran, we are committed to building an open, inclusive, fair, and ambitious culture. This is a shared responsibility across all teams, not just for our leaders.

This framework reaffirms our Board's commitment to investing in a healthy, supportive workplace that prioritises wellbeing, prevents burnout, and makes us an employer of choice. Supporting staff wellbeing is a strategic investment in our future.

Rooted in our values of caring, safe, and respectful, the framework aligns with national priorities and complements our People Strategy, Workforce Plan, and Health and Wellbeing Framework. It also supports our Caring for Ayrshire vision.

We will review progress annually, sharing updates with staff and stakeholders to ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

Our culture framework is built on five pillars:

1. Leadership
2. Equity and diversity
3. Just and open
4. Mental health and wellbeing
5. Using our resources effectively

Our aims and objectives

1. Leadership

We will foster a culture of strong teams, compassionate leadership, and engaged staff—supported by targeted development for both new and experienced leaders.

Effective leadership is key to a supportive, inclusive culture that promotes wellbeing and improves care. To meet future challenges, we must nurture leadership at all levels by equipping staff with the skills and confidence to lead, regardless of role.

By investing in leadership development across our workforce, we empower our People, strengthen our culture, and drive meaningful change.

How we will do this

- **Reflective practice:** Promoting critical thinking through models like Values Based Reflective Practice (VBRP®).
- **Leadership development:** Equipping managers to lead change and engage teams, supported by national programmes like Leading for the Future and Leading to Change.
- **Line management training:** Ensuring all managers have core skills, including:
 - Newly appointed leadership programme
 - Daring to succeed programme
- **Values and induction:** Embedding our values through corporate induction and a trauma-informed approach
- **Succession planning:** Preparing future leaders up to Chief Executive level.
- **Coaching and mentoring:** Delivering national and local programmes.
- **360° feedback:** Mandatory for senior leaders every two years.
- **Distributed working:** Supporting flexible, remote collaboration with the right tools and guidance.
- **Performance and engagement:** Enhancing tools like iMatter and PDR to support development.
- **Values and leadership framework:** Using staff feedback to shape culture initiatives.
- **Digital innovation:** Building a digitally confident, inclusive workforce that uses technology to improve wellbeing, collaboration, and care.

How we will measure this

- **Programme participation:** Monitoring staff completion of training and development.
- **iMatter:** Using engagement data to inform a corporate action plan and measure participation.
- **Mandatory and Statutory Training (MAST) compliance:** Tracking completion of mandatory training.
- **Performance and Development Review (PDR):** Evaluating how well performance reviews support development.
- **Distributed working:** Measuring space use and staff feedback on flexibility, access, and collaboration.
- **Values-based feedback:** Analysing questionnaire responses to guide cultural improvements.

2. Equity and diversity

We are committed to fostering a culture where all staff feel valued, respected, and supported, regardless of background.

Equality is the foundation of our workplace. Everyone is protected by the nine characteristics defined in law: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Everyone has the right to work free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. Upholding these rights is not only a legal obligation, but also a moral imperative that shapes a fair, respectful, and inclusive environment for all.

To reflect the communities we serve, we aim to build a diverse workforce where everyone feels safe and empowered. We recognise that structural barriers still exist and are committed to removing them, advancing equity, and strengthening inclusion through the Public Sector Equality Duty.

How we will do this

- **Monitor data:** Analyse staff concerns and incidents by protected characteristics to identify and address inequalities.
- **Improve reporting:** Launch a confidential, accessible system for reporting discrimination.

- **Training:** Roll out bystander and unconscious bias training to challenge harmful behaviours and assumptions.
- **Mentoring and coaching:** Support under-represented groups with tailored development opportunities.
- **Embed equalities:** Integrate equality principles into induction, leadership programmes, and everyday practice.
- **NHS disability passport:** Promote consistent, person-centred support for disabled staff, integrated into HR processes.
- **Inclusive recruitment:** Align recruitment practices with Scottish Government guidance and engage under-represented communities.
- **Equally safe:** Embed gender-based violence prevention across policies, training, and support systems.
- **Fair wellbeing access:** Ensure equitable access to wellbeing support across all staff groups.

How we will measure this

- **Training participation:** Track quarterly engagement in equality-related training by role and department.
- **Staff feedback:** Use regular surveys, including values-based questionnaires, to assess perceptions of equality
- **Incident reporting:** Review discrimination and harassment reports quarterly, analysing trends by group, location, and protected characteristics.
- **Workforce diversity:** Analyse demographics to ensure representation at all levels.
- **RACE equity markers:** Monitor systemic inequalities and guide targeted actions.
- **Recruitment metrics:** Track vacancy rates, time to hire, applicant diversity, source of hire, and retention.
- **Workforce metrics:** Monitor headcount, demographics, turnover, absence, training participation, pay bands, and equality data.

3. Just and open

We will create a culture grounded in trust, ethics, and continuous improvement, where staff feel valued, respected, and empowered to deliver high-quality care.

We are committed to building a workplace where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued, and where every voice matters. In this environment, every voice matters, mistakes are learning opportunities, and accountability is balanced with support. By living our values daily, we foster respect, inclusion, and professionalism across the organisation.

How we will do this

- **Give respect, get respect:** Treat each other fairly, listen actively, and value diverse views.
- **Courageous conversations:** Encourage open, respectful dialogue and constructive feedback.
- **Strengthen our approach to employee relations:** Resolve issues promptly and fairly with empathy and clear communication.
- **Speak up advocates:** Continue supporting staff to raise concerns safely.
- **Learning reviews:** Focus on improvement, not blame, using insights to strengthen systems and behaviours.
- **Debrief after challenges:** Reflect after challenges to support learning and teamwork.
- **Apply human factors principles:** Design systems and environments that support wellbeing, performance, and safety.

How we will measure this

- **Training:** Track uptake of employee relations and 'Give Respect, Get Respect' toolkit.
- **Process improvements:** Monitor faster resolution times for employee relations cases and reduced suspension.
- **Resolution methods:** Compare formal and informal outcomes; track mediation use.
- **Staff feedback:** Use pulse surveys, iMatter data, and manager insights to assess satisfaction and engagement.
- **Reporting and support:** Monitor increases in adverse event reporting and staff confidence in raising concerns or seeking support.

4. Mental health and wellbeing

We will continue to build a compassionate and respectful workplace where openness, trust, and support allow all staff to feel valued and thrive, while delivering exceptional, patient-centred care.

Supporting the wellbeing of our staff is essential to sustaining a healthy, high-performing organisation. We are committed to creating an environment where people feel safe, supported, and empowered.

Our focus must shift from short term responses to building lasting, meaningful support for our staff. This includes embedding mental health and wellbeing into everyday working life, ensuring support is not only available in times of crisis, but consistently accessible and responsive to evolving needs. By creating a culture where mental health is openly acknowledged and actively supported, we can foster a healthier, more resilient workforce equipped to meet the challenges ahead.

The wellbeing framework will drive this work.

How we will do this

- **Monitor and respond to staff feedback:** to ensure engagement remain relevant and effective.
- **Develop and deliver a trauma-informed practice implementation plan:** clear focus on Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders Training (STILT) and internal training.
- **Develop a Civility Saves Lives programme:** based on its ethos and data.
- **Embed psychological safety in leadership programmes:** to foster compassionate, inclusive and high-performing teams.
- **Implement our wellbeing strategy:** to support a positive, thriving workplace culture.
- **Establish the Staff Wellbeing and Safety Professional Leadership Group (SWSPLG):** to drive collaborative action on staff wellbeing and safety.
- **Analyse wellbeing trends:** to enable targeted support and continuous improvement.
- **Ensure equitable support:** strengthened collaboration and inclusive wellbeing resources.
- **Promote autonomy:** to empower staff to raise wellbeing concerns and access support.
- **National wellbeing initiatives:** to enhance local staff support.
- **Embed Quality Improvement (QI):** to improve team culture and working practices.
- **Encourage proactive learning:** feedback, reflection and wellbeing data.
- **Support effective escalation:** to raise concerns, with clear routes for escalation and timely resolution.
- **Share and celebrate good practice:** to foster a culture of shared success and wellbeing.

- **Champion our Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework 2025–2028:** to apply the framework's principles to build a compassionate, inclusive, and equitable workplace.

How we will measure this

- **Use staff feedback tools:** (for example, bespoke surveys, iMatter) to track trends, identify improvements, and measure impact of wellbeing initiatives .
- **Measure awareness and uptake:** of wellbeing resources across staff groups, analysing engagement and feedback.
- **Leadership and management training:** to increase participation.
- **Analyse health-related absences:** by type, frequency, duration, and staff group.
- **Monitor ergonomic support:** by assessments completed, user demographics, and satisfaction feedback.
- **Track workplace incidents:** to track the number, type, and severity of workplace incident to support prevention and compliance with NHS health and safety standards.
- **Measure staff confidence in discussing mental health:** targeted survey questions on psychological safety and awareness of mental health and wellbeing support.
- **Measure staff engagement and retention:** staff survey results, turnover data, exit interview themes, and participation in wellbeing initiatives.
- **Track peer support and team building:** attendance at structured activities and staff feedback on accessibility, relevance, and impact.
- **Measure support for staff work-life balance:** flexible working arrangements, special leave options, and wellbeing initiatives, alongside staff feedback.
- **Monitor variation in staff health outcomes:** by analysing sickness absence, occupational health referrals, and use of wellbeing services across staff groups.
- **Monitor equity of access:** by assessing variation in staff uptake of wellbeing services, occupational health referrals, training participation, and use of support services.
- **Analyse recruitment and retention metrics:** by vacancy rates, turnover, length of service, as well as staff and demographic breakdown.
- **Ensure compliance with National standards.**

5. Using our resources effectively

We will ensure that our managers are equipped with the skills and competencies for inclusive and effective leadership, enabling them to manage people and resources fairly, equitably, and sustainably, foster a culture where all staff feel valued, respected, and supported, and prioritise wellbeing, health, and safety, with progress supported through ongoing development and evaluation.

How we will do this

- **Implement a line management development programme:** covering clinical, financial and staff governance responsibilities.
- **Deliver comprehensive training and support:** to equip front-line managers with core skills and behaviours aligned to NHS Ayrshire & Arran values.
- **Enhance performance:** using Microsoft 365 and digital solutions to improve access to integrated service, workforce, and financial data.
- **Ensure meaningful TURAS appraisals and Personal Development Reviews (PDR):** completion and quality evaluated through staff feedback and local audit processes.
- **Support mandatory and statutory training compliance:** through e-Learning platforms such as LearnPro, and TURAS Learn, with regular compliance reports.
- **Encourage staff survey participation:** using results to co-develop actions that enhance team culture and support staff wellbeing.
- **Establish clear communication processes:** to support role clarity and alignment with PDRs, iMatter and team objectives.
- **Review sickness absence data:** working with HR and staff to implement targeted attendance and wellbeing interventions.

How we will measure this

- **Track manager training:** (e-learning and face-to face) to evaluate impact through post-training feedback.
- **Monitor Microsoft 365 usage:** to analyse service, workforce, and finance data:
 - **Improvement indicators:** more timely and accurate reporting, data-driven decision-making processes, and improved efficiency.
 - **Success measures:** positive team feedback on digital tools and measurable improvements in key performance indicators related to service and care delivery.

- **Measure PDR compliance:** ensuring all staff have current and meaningful reviews.
- **Use LearnPro scorecard:** to measure training compliance.
- **Increase iMatter participation:** with each team co-producing one SMART wellbeing action within four weeks of survey results, and progress reviewed quarterly.
- **Assess role clarity and communication:** year-on-year improvement in iMatter indicators.
- **Evidence team alignment of team goals and organisational priorities:** shared and regularly reviewed team objectives.
- **Quarterly analysis of sickness absence data:** with documented interventions and a reduction in short and long-term absence over time.
- **Staff feedback and wellbeing indicators:** to evaluate the impact of interventions.

Governance

The annual action plan will be submitted for approval as part of the organisation's planning cycle, ensuring alignment with our leadership at every level. The plan will be reviewed by:

- Culture Steering Group
- Corporate Management Team (CMT)
- Area Partnership Forum (APF)
- Staff Governance Committee

We have developed this culture framework through close collaboration with key partners and stakeholders, ensuring it reflects the lived experiences and aspirations of our diverse workforce. This collaborative approach will continue, drawing on the insights of a wide network of forums across health, social care, and community settings.

To ensure a truly inclusive and representative framework, we are actively engaging with staff networks such as the equalities subgroups. These voices are vital in shaping a culture that is compassionate, inclusive, and empowering for all.

As we move into implementation, we remain committed to open dialogue and strong, inclusive partnerships. Engagement will remain at the heart of everything we do, ensuring that this framework evolves in response to the needs and feedback of those it is designed to support.

Further information

For more information, please contact Carrie Fivey, Learning and Organisational Development Manager, Carrie.fivey@aapct.scot.nhs.uk

