

Staff health, safety and wellbeing framework 2025-2028



NHS Ayrshire & Arran
Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework

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Welcome from Sarah Leslie, Director of People, Safety and Culture



"Health, safety and wellbeing are central to our People Strategy for NHS Ayrshire & Arran. I am pleased to introduce our first Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing Framework, which will guide our work to 2028.

"We have a strong history of supporting staff through Occupational Health and Safety services and early innovation in spiritual and wellbeing care. However, the pandemic and financial pressures have exposed inequalities and new needs across our workforce. National strategies and staff feedback show that coordinated support is now essential.

"To respond, we must refocus our approach. Colleagues across psychology, spiritual care, occupational health and safety, organisation development and staff wellbeing must work closely with staff and trade unions, ensuring support is trauma informed and responsive to today's workplace."

"This framework brings current and new initiatives into a single, system wide programme. It will help us track progress, guide investment and improve 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 role matters. Whether someone works in clinical care, support services, leadership or behind the scenes, each person plays a part in providing safe, kind and effective patient care.

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 our workplace to be somewhere our staff feel supported, appreciated and able to thrive.

We recognise the complex and demanding nature of the work our staff undertake and the impact this can have on physical health, mental health, wellbeing and safety. We are committed understanding and responding to these needs through evidence-based, trauma-informed and inclusive approaches.

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 explains how we will put this vision into practice. 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, our Culture Framework 2025-28 sets out the culture changes we aim to make across the organisation over the next three years. You can access our [Culture Framework here](#).

Our context

Workplace health, safety and wellbeing is complex and multifactorial. It encompasses physical and mental health; financial wellbeing; emotional and spiritual wellbeing; physical health and lifestyle; health and safety at work; and the environments in which people live and work. These elements are interconnected. Challenges in one area often impact others - both inside and outside the workplace.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran supports a balanced approach to work-life integration, and because of this, we take a **whole-person approach** to wellbeing. We recognise that staff have different backgrounds, experiences and needs, and that not everyone needs the same kind of support.

Health is shaped over the course of a lifetime by a set of key building blocks, including education, employment, physical and social environments, and access to public services. Access to these building blocks is influenced by resources, such as income, knowledge and social connections.

Evidence consistently shows that people with fewer resources experience poorer health outcomes. With wide income variation in our workforce, lower paid staff are more likely to face health challenges.

This means we need to offer support that is available to everyone, but with extra help where need is greatest. We also need to remove barriers such as:

- cost, including hidden cost;
- stigma;
- physical and cultural accessibility; and
- discrimination.

The past five years have placed unprecedented pressure on health and social care. Recovery from COVID-19, combined with sustained financial and service pressures, has affected and continues to affect, both organisational resilience and individual wellbeing. We have seen increased levels of stress, anxiety, burnout, sustained sickness absence and presenteeism.

We also have an ageing workforce, more long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities and specific issues such as menopause and cancer, all of which affect wellbeing at work. These realities shape the approach set out in this framework.

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. The team will coordinate 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 providing professional advice and guidance to leaders and managers on legislation and effective health, safety and wellbeing practice, in line with the aims of this framework.
- Leaders and managers are responsible for delivering safe, effective, and compassionate health, safety, and wellbeing practices, using trauma-informed principles, in line with professional guidance and relevant local and national policy and legislation provided.
- 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 focuses on five domains that set out how we will support and improve staff health, safety and wellbeing. These areas reflect the needs of our workforce and the environment in which we work, and aim to make a positive difference for individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole.



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 through community wealth building is a longterm commitment, not a shortterm or oneoff programme. It reflects the Board's intention to use its assets and resources responsibly – employing people, buying goods and services, managing land and buildings, and forming strong partnerships.

Employment is a major social determinant of health, and NHS Ayrshire & Arran already pays above the real Living Wage and holds Care Positive, Disability Confident, Equally Safe at Work and Defence Employer Scheme accreditations. Our employability ambition is set out in our People Strategy, including the development of a new employability plan to support staff to stay at work, alongside staff who want to progress their careers.

We recognise the current economic pressures and their impact on staff wellbeing. Addressing in work poverty through holistic wellbeing and financial inclusion can reduce stress and improve quality of life of our staff. Supporting financial wellbeing benefits not only staff but also their families and communities.

Over the next three years, we will:

- **develop an Employability Plan, aligned with our People Strategy, creating entry routes for those wanting to stay at work and economically active;**
- **expand our staff financial wellbeing group and programme, providing support resources and data improvement, to learn from staff lived experience;**
- **provide learning and resources on poverty and financial wellbeing to support resilience and inform decisions;**
- **explore Endowment Funding for staff wellbeing and tackle in-work poverty; and**
- **strengthen our anchor role by investing locally 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



Emotional and spiritual wellbeing covers psychological support, spiritual care and compassionate listening, all grounded in strong, supportive relationships. It focuses on prevention, early help and access to specialist mental health care to support staff wellbeing.

Mental health is shaped by experiences throughout life, with key stages such as early childhood, adolescence, working life and ageing playing a critical role. Income, food and housing security strongly influence wellbeing, while social factors, including poverty, education and discrimination, affect people differently at each stage.



Inclusive workplaces that provide fair, meaningful work and ensure staff feel valued benefit both employees and organisations. Poor mental health increases absenteeism and presenteeism, reducing productivity and affecting wellbeing across teams.

Work can have a positive or negative impact on mental health. According to new research from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD):



- **over a quarter (26 per cent) of Scottish workers feel that work negatively affects their mental health; and**
- **more than a third (34 per cent) of those impacted are likely to quit their job in the next 12 months.**

The [CIPD's annual Working Lives Scotland report](#) (June 2025) analyses the day-to-day experiences of over 1,000 Scottish workers. The findings from the latest report highlight the urgent need for organisations to prioritise good people management and employee wellbeing, with high workloads, stress and exhaustion among the contributing factors negatively impacting workers health:

- Over half of Scottish workers (59 per cent) said they are always, or sometimes, under excessive pressure at work.
- Close to two-thirds (64 per cent) said they feel exhausted at work either all or some of the time.
- Nearly half (46 per cent) of workers in Scotland, who say their workloads are too high, find it hard to relax in their personal time because of their work.
- Over the past 12-months close to half (48 per cent) of Scottish workers have experienced some form of physical health condition, whilst 44 per cent have experienced a mental health condition.
- Those who say work has a negative impact on their mental health also report significantly lower job satisfaction (34 per cent) than those who said work has a positive impact on their mental health (95 per cent).

The [Scottish Government's Improving Wellbeing and Working Cultures publication](#) identifies wellbeing as one of three pillars of a positive workplace culture. Supporting staff's emotional and spiritual needs is a key organisational priority and essential to recruiting and retaining experienced people who deliver high quality care.

By recognising these needs, we take a holistic approach to wellbeing, addressing work related stress and burnout and using trauma informed practices to reduce the impact of difficult experiences.

We will continue to:

- maintain and resource Staff Wellbeing Centres as quiet, protected spaces for all staff, ensuring they are well promoted; and
- provide staff care and specialist interventions through a tiered emotional, spiritual and mental wellbeing model, ensuring staff can access the right support when needed.

Over the next three years, we will:

- **implement a suicide prevention plan for NHS Ayrshire & Arran;**
- **strengthen referral pathways to local and national specialist support services;**
- **expand opportunities for group reflective practice;**
- **establish a process to address issues affecting staff groups in collaboration with support and governance teams;**
- **provide guidance to managers across NHS and integrated services to help identify and respond to wellbeing concerns;**
- **contribute to training on emotional, spiritual and mental wellbeing;**
- **support relational wellbeing by managing the Staff Wellbeing App, Viva Engage community, wellness events and staff networks; and**
- **develop peer support to extend the reach of emotional and spiritual care across 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 (**image 1**) has been set in line with statutory and legislative requirements, and promotes a “Plan, Do, Check, Act” model (**image 2**).

While we cannot remove all risk, we are committed to a pragmatic, proportionate approach to assure continual improvement to the level of hazard and risk everyone affected by our work.

Alongside maintaining safe environments, we must also support staff wellbeing and respond to wider social, economic and environmental challenges.

Image 1



Image 2



Over the next three years, we will:

- **identify and evaluate health and safety risks** for everyone, and decide what needs to be prioritised, along with the resources required, so we can plan and put the right protective measures in place;
- **maintain strong safety standards** by giving staff the right training in Occupational Health and Safety. This includes training in moving and handling (patients and non-patients); managing violence and aggression; general health and safety awareness; and completing risk assessments for all staff levels;
- **provide assurance to key governance groups** that we are meeting our legal responsibilities for protecting the health and safety of staff and anyone affected by our work;
- **support the creation and upkeep of safe workplaces**, including good ventilation, ergonomic workstations, and safe routes for entering and leaving buildings; and
- **build on NHS Ayrshire & Arran's focus on people, safety, quality, and finance** by improving or introducing new ways of working. This includes recognising that distributed or hybrid working (where appropriate for the role) can offer major benefits, giving staff more flexibility to work across different sites or from home, rather than being tied to one fixed location.

5. Physical health and lifestyle

Physical inactivity contributes to preventable conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, depression, dementia, musculoskeletal disorders and type 2 diabetes. Regular activity improves physical and mental health, supports a healthy weight and enhances overall wellbeing. It also promotes sustainable travel through active choices, such as walking, cycling and public transport.

Improving activity levels will reduce health inequalities. Women, people living in deprived areas, disabled adults, those with mental health challenges and ethnic minority groups are typically less active. The Burden of Disease Attributable to Physical Inactivity (2024) highlights that the greatest risks are among older adults, people in deprived communities and those with disabilities or long term conditions. The biggest impact on population health comes from removing barriers that prevent those with the lowest activity levels from achieving even small, sustained increases.

Scotland's policy direction is clear. The Population Health Framework (2025) and the Physical Activity for Health Framework (2024) prioritise active environments (spaces for play, walking, wheeling and cycling) and access to supportive services, such as affordable cycles. A systems based approach to physical activity (2022) provides a model for local and national action.

Supporting staff health is essential. Promoting physical activity within NHS Ayrshire & Arran supports musculoskeletal health, mental wellbeing and wider family and community benefits.

Over the next three years, we will apply a systems based approach and implement the Physical Activity for Health Framework, including reviewing local action plans to identify 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; and health surveillance and immunisations.

Peoples' health

People's busy lives, work, family responsibilities, money pressures, and lifestyle choices can have a big impact on both physical and mental health. Because of this, it's important to look at all aspects of a person's wellbeing when supporting them with any health or welfare issue. This applies whether you're a colleague, a manager, or part of the Occupational Health Services (OHS) team.

Using brief interventions and signposting during OHS consultations can help people make positive changes. By ensuring managers and OHS staff use these approaches, we aim to support healthier behaviours, improve wellbeing, and help people stay well at work.

Reasonable adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010, NHS Ayrshire & Arran must consider reasonable adjustments that support physical and cognitive health, including neurodiversity. Occupational Health specialists advise managers on adjustments that help staff with disabilities or long-term conditions carry out their roles effectively and equitably.

Over the next three years, we will continue supporting staff with disabilities or long-term conditions to remain in work and fulfil their roles.

Health surveillance

We provide health surveillance programmes that detect work related ill health, such as conditions linked to noise or vibration exposure. These checks allow staff to raise concerns and reinforce safety training. Occupational Health delivers a range of surveillance programmes to protect staff health and safety.

Over the next three years, we will strengthen and expand staff immunisation programmes; and continue to deliver robust health surveillance programmes in partnership with services.

Health needs assessment

Each of our five domains for improvement explains 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 will remain fragmented, reducing the overall impact of the Board's investment and the effectiveness of interventions for individuals and teams.

By delivering this plan collaboratively, we have the opportunity to build strong evidence and data sets that will help 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.

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 three-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 Corporate Management Team, the Area Partnership Forum and Staff Governance Committee and will be the responsibility of the Director for People, Safety and Culture.

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.

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 intranet pages provide all staff with supporting information about health, safety and wellbeing relevant to each of our five health, safety and wellbeing domains.

Further information

[People Strategy 2025-2030](#)

[Culture Framework](#)

Staff working in NHS Ayrshire & Arran can find further information on the Staff Wellbeing pages on the staff intranet, AthenA.

For more information, please contact Graham Armstrong, Head of Occupational Health and Safety, graham.armstrong2@aapct.scot.nhs.uk

