

Culture framework 2025-2028



NHS Ayrshire & Arran
Culture framework

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



“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 journey began with establishing our core values: Caring, Safe and Respectful. These values continue to guide decision making and compassionate, person centred care, and are firmly embedded and widely owned across our workforce.

We have since adopted a strategic, organisation wide approach to culture, focused on strengthening psychological safety, so that staff feel engaged, heard and valued. Managers have taken part in development sessions and created pledges and action plans to enhance team culture, with psychological safety now central to leadership development.

A comprehensive culture review, informed by staff feedback across all directorates and partnerships, shaped key actions in our People Strategy and our ambition to be an exemplar employer that prioritises staff wellbeing.

To progress this work, we developed a seven step framework that underpins our Culture Plan, promoting meaningful relationships and engagement. An internal audit of cultural drivers further ensured our Culture Framework remains evidence based, inclusive and responsive to staff needs.



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 reduction in identified representation gaps.
- **RACE equity markers:** Changes in inequalities over time.
- **Recruitment experience:** Staff views on fairness and inclusion.

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.

We will 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 frontline 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 and monitoring

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.

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.

Further information

For more information, please contact Carrie Fivey, Head of Learning, Development and Staff Experience, Carrie.fivey@aapct.scot.nhs.uk

