

## **Towards A Mentally Flourishing Scotland**

### **Inverclyde Council**

This document is welcomed in terms of promoting a broad based, cross cutting approach to the promotion of wellbeing in our communities.

The document emphasises the need to promote and support economic and social conditions which are conducive to the health and safety of our population.

We note the relationship between good mental health and wellbeing (which we view as having a relevance across Council services).

The three main themes developed in the paper are helpful i.e. promotion (of protective factors), prevention (of mental and physical ill health) and support (improvements in quality of life achieved through pursuit of social inclusion, better access to health and care services, employment, good quality housing, education and recreational activities).

In many respects the agendas developed are entirely consistent with the duties and functions of local authorities across a range of areas. Many of the themes developed resonate with the UK Equality Review 2007.

The paper advances and promotes a multi agency partnership approach to health and well being on a population basis and is necessarily 'broad brush' in its approach.

It is clearly essential that councils define areas of priority for partnership action to promote mental health and wellbeing.

Within our own local context we note that Inverclyde currently suffers from depopulation and that those who leave the area tend to be younger people who are able to compete in the broader job market. While this in itself is of concern it weakens the informal care available to the ageing population and places an additional challenge on council services in relation to the support and inclusion of our older adult population. Clearly social isolation, poor mental and physical health and poverty are of particular concern to us.

A partnership approach which provides better and more accessible health and care services to our older population is therefore high on our corporate agenda. This in combination with initiatives around economic redevelopment aimed at retaining our younger population is essential such that our community capacity for informal (and formal) carers is secured.

In Inverclyde we have severe challenges in relation to our addictions profile. This can only be addressed through a partnership approach in further developing our networks of services which provide inputs in relation to health improvement (e.g. in schools), treatment and rehabilitation, protection and control (e.g. drug availability and access to alcohol), community safety and importantly providing a pathway back to training and employment for those who have experienced difficulties in this area.

The safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults is high on the council's agenda in developing partnership working which facilitates growth, inclusion and wellbeing.

Inverclyde Council has a well developed anti poverty strategy which includes the promotion of financial literacy and welfare rights representation.

The provision of good quality housing with housing support services which enable people with serious mental health problems to live full and integrated lives within their community is well developed. Support services have been redesigned to maximise integration across all life domains e.g. vocational training, further education, recreation and volunteering opportunities.

The Council has fully met its obligation to fund the development of independent advocacy services and has developed opportunities for group advocacy and for carers support.

Inverclyde Council has led on the Workforce Plus and NEET strategy and has achieved favourable outcomes in both groups identifying the need to further develop employer engagement strategies and social enterprise to the benefit to those who are furthest from the labour market.

Inverclyde Council has engaged fully with the National Programme and has benefitted from creating Choose Life coordinator post which has facilitated a broad engagement with training and awareness campaigns and opportunities.

Support from Scottish Government in relation to licensing and the control of drugs is of key importance. Similarly assistance to councils in relation to the cost of a growing and ageing population (particularly where depopulation is an issue) is of paramount importance in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing.

The facilitation of broadly based opportunities for access into employment and training has a very high priority. The recognition that those furthest from the job market are also those who are most likely to experience poor physical and mental health and low wellbeing is noted and the potential for pathways which promote social integration (with related health gains), sheltered or supported employment, vocational training and further education is an area of fundamental importance.

We note that there is scope for further unification in relation to the development of an overarching framework which includes health inequalities, mental health and wellbeing and the UK equalities agenda and would welcome further input from Scottish Government in this respect.

All of the above have resource implications for local authorities and while we embrace the underlying values and ambitions additional resources will be required if we are to deliver on population health and equalities agenda.

Our Local Outcome Agreement contains implementation targets which will demonstrate progress towards achieving our objectives for the Inverclyde community.

Our targets are derived from our community planning aspirations which reflect whole system partnership working.

As a council we have been fully involved with partners in taking forward this agenda in line with the national strategy.